



BARN DOORS
AND
BYWAYS
BY
WALTER PRICHARD EATON





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BARN DOORS AND BYWAYS



It seems to flow away from under your feet. You look out over the trees to a valley, checkered with green pastures and brown squares of ploughed land, with here and there a white house. *See page 29*

BARN DOORS AND BYWAYS

BY

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

AUTHOR OF "THE AMERICAN STAGE OF TO-DAY," ETC.

PICTURES AND DECORATIONS BY
WALTER KING STONE



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TO STELLA

Two rovers of the windy world were we,
From storm-scarred summits piled against the blue,
To salty towns where crooked lanes peeped through
Their gray, slant shanties at the level sea ;
Each byway beckoned that our feet were free ;
Sack was the air of deep-drawn, heady brew ;
And every dusty road-side flower that grew,
A welcoming banner flown for you and me.

. That woman, look, the lying cheek and hair !
The hand that grasps her arm, bejewelled, gross !
These roaring slits of streets have sucked the air.
Why did our sweet days end and star-hushed nights ?
The throng has pressed you from my side — draw
close —

I cannot see you, Dear, for all these lights !

THE papers collected in the volume were written in many moods, and in many places, during the past half dozen years, and for the most part published in various magazines:—*Barn Doors, Roads, Rivers, The Harbor*, and *A Berkshire Winter*, in Scribner's Magazine; *Washington Square—a Meditation*, in the Atlantic Monthly; *The Dismal Swamp and Night*, in Harper's Monthly; *Bird Environments*, in Harper's Bazar; *The Abandoned Farm*, in The American Magazine; *The Landscape that Flows*, in Collier's Weekly; *In Old South County*, in Outing; *Roadside Gardens*, in House and Garden, and *Wild Life in New York*, in The Outlook (issue of April 2, 1910). Grateful acknowledgment is made to the editors of these publications for their kind permission to reprint.

W. P. E.

STOCKBRIDGE,
MASSACHUSETTS

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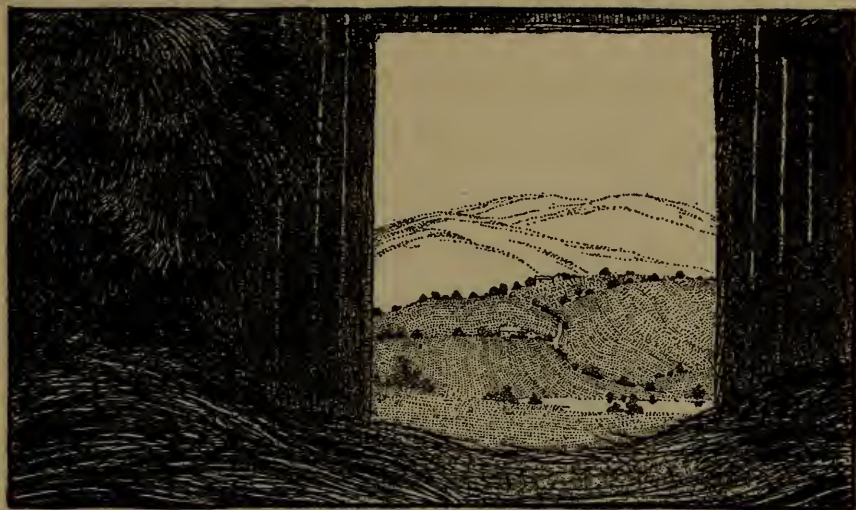
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BARN DOORS AND BYWAYS



I

BARN DOORS

WE all, I suppose, have some precious little pictures stored away in our memories with the magic of childhood or the open world about them, pictures that flash upon our inward eye, like Wordsworth's daffodils, and bring pleasure and the dancing heart. It was Wordsworth's genius to feel so profoundly that his pictures persisted in memory till he could transcribe them into a poem. Called the poet of tranquillity, his tranquillity was like Teufelsdröckh's, that of the spinning top. More than all others, he is the poet of tremendous emotion. And it was in an effort to realize with true intensity of feeling my own

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stored impressions of natural scenes that I came to recognize how large and how beautiful a place is filled in my memory by barn-door landscapes. They have been coming back to me one by one since I saw Moosilauke between golden, dusty walls of hay the other morning, coming back with an aura of enchantment upon them, coming back from forgotten childhood, from careless tramps down world in autumn, from all my country yesterdays. A little gallery of barn-door landscapes, of peeps into the ideal — for every barn-door landscape is a perfect composition! — they are very precious to me now that I have sorted and arranged them, hung them, as it were. I wonder if others could not do equally well in the galleries of their memory?

The earliest barn-door vista of which you have recollection was not many miles from Boston, and there looms in the foreground a great yellow stage-coach swung on straps, that used to ply between Reading and North Reading until the trolley superseded it hardly a generation ago. It was your grandfather's barn that housed this coach,

after it had deposited you at grandfather's gate across the road, beneath the balm-of-Gilead tree that made cut fingers a pleasure. Of course, with only an eager look over the road, where the hens were scratching in the dust, you went right up the path and in the door to see grandfather, who sat in a high-backed rocking-chair by the kitchen window. After you had greeted him and grandmother had given you a kiss and a cookie and you had climbed up one step into the dining-room, then up a steep flight of stairs that led out of the dining-room like a closet, and then gone down three steps into a chamber that smelled curiously musty, and washed your hands with water from a pitcher with pink roses on it, you rushed excitedly out to the barn — and got your hands dirty again. For you did n't stop to look at barn-door pictures then. You dashed to pat the horses' noses, you climbed into the hay, you investigated the feed-boxes, you asked Fred if you could pitch bedding to-morrow. Then you fell out of the barn by the rear door, a drop of eight feet that landed you in perilous muck, and ran down the slope to the saw-mill, the pungent

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odor of the fresh-cut wood gladdening your nostrils, the rhythmic screeches of the saw sounding like music in your ear. You watched the men ripping the logs into boards for a while and filled your shoes with sawdust as you climbed the great pile of it to put your hand in front of the blow-pipe and feel the sting of the hot particles as they peppered forth. Then you looked down-stream longingly to the willows. When you got back to the house for dinner your hair was wet.

It was later, after supper, perhaps, or as you strolled aimlessly about one morning waiting for somebody to go fishing, that the barn-door picture claimed attention. Even then you gave it no conscious thought; it was just there, a part of all this pleasant life that surrounded you. But you came to look at it two or three times a day. The barn stood east and west, virgin of paint, a lovely mouse gray. The great east door, when the yellow coach did not block it, framed a dim interior with walls of dusty, golden hay, and a white hen or two, perhaps a rooster with a red comb, strolling about the floor making sleepy sounds. A pungent smell came forth that you

loved. And at the other end, down the vista of the golden hay, the little west door pierced through and held a landscape of surpassing charm, a corner of the mill roof, a graceful willow, and far away the dome of a green hill against the blue sky. If you went to the right or the left of the barn the picture was not the same, there was more of it, unpleasant details obtruded. Just why, it never occurred to you to ask, but that barn-door landscape was for you the essence of things. You watched the sunset through the hay while the rest went up on Huckleberry Hill. They thought you wanted to see Fred milk—and maybe that was partially the reason.

It was a year later. You were tired because the ride had been a long one, and when the train finally reached your destination and you climbed into the mountain wagon you were cross into the bargain, for a thunderstorm was gathering down, and your first sight of real mountains, dreamed of for months, promised to be spoiled. The wagon climbed uphill it seemed for interminable miles between walls of trees, birches taller, straighter than you had ever dreamed,

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giant hemlocks and spruces, and the thunder rolled ominously in the distance. But never a sight of any mountains greeted your impatient gaze. Finally you came out on the top of the rise, and there was a valley below, and across it the clouds seemed to be trailing in the tops of the trees. "There are your mountains," said your father. "Where?" said you. You saw nothing but the clouds in the trees. "It's coming!" said the driver. A white mist was walking across the valley and overhead all was black, the lightning flashed, the thunder echoed. The driver pulled down the hoods just as the rain hit the wagon with a swirl, and you lurched down the slope in semi-darkness. Suddenly the driver turned the horses sharply, and you dashed into a barn, into the hot smell of hay, while the rain thundered on the roof and the wagon dripped upon the floor. You were to wait there till the storm was over.

There was a little door at the far end of the barn, left open with a bar across. Through that you looked down a slope steeper than any you ever saw to a ravine where water ran, but beyond



At the other end, down the vista of the golden hay, the little west door
pierced through and held a landscape of surpassing charm

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that was nothing but the white wall of the rain and clouds in the trees. Presently a mystery was brought to pass. The white wall of the rain receded. The clouds lifted from the trees. As the world grew lighter the clouds lifted higher and higher. Fascinated, you watched them roll up like a giant curtain at a play, and ever as they rolled beneath them were more trees. Did the hill go up forever? As the first sun shaft, level, for the sun was now near to setting, shot into the ravine and the trees shot back flashes of diamond, the clouds rolled up quicker, higher, blew off into nothingness with a whisk of vapor, and before your astonished eyes the trees went up, shoulder on green shoulder, and then the rocks, and then the sharp summit against the sky. And all this you saw through the little barn door while the horses stamped behind you and your father talked with the farmer in dim, far-off tones, and there was the smell of hay.

You looked back lingeringly as the wagon drove out on the sloppy road, into the chilled air. Your mountain still shot up in the middle of the picture. Outside, you saw other mountains,

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higher, blue, huddling into the distance. But none of them was so wonderful as that behind, nor ever would be. It came out of the mist of rain; it came framed alone.

Years passed before you became a real philosopher and learned to loathe motor-cars. There was the tang of autumn in the air, apples ripened by the roadside, and in the night when you awoke you could hear them falling in the orchard. Disdaining all conveyances, most of all the loathed motor-car — which, under any circumstances, you could not afford! — you tramped up and down the clean country and forgot there were such things as towns, forgot, even, that sooner or later you must return to one of them, the largest and the ugliest, and plunge once more into the hurry and the frenzy of its artificial life. Now and then inhabitants of this town, in goggles and veils, flashy and loud-mouthed and too obviously well-to-do, purred expensively by you when from necessity you were forced to pound your feet along a main high road to reach the next delectable by-path. You glared at them, brutal reminders of things forgotten, and shrank up

against the bushes, while they, disdainfully glancing at you as at a tramp, tore on in dust and smell. After they were out of sight you came out on the road again and resumed your easy, swinging stride, watching for the red gleam of an apple-tree that you might forget the smell in the acid aroma of its fruit.

Have I said that you had a companion? Ah, but you did, quite the most wonderful companion in the world! And she, born and reared in that smoky city beyond the horizon, in that city of dreadful night, had never known the country except as a summer boarder knows it, had never watched the virgin spring come up from the south leaving violets where it trod, nor autumn paint the woods and bring down the butternuts on frosty nights when the stars are alive. How wonderful it was to her! How these days of windy clarity and soft ripeness, these nights of silent, hushed star talk, these miles of white road and doming pastures and woodland ponds dancing in the sun or bearing on their bosoms the reds and golds of mirrored trees, caught her up, enthralled her, melted into that other mys-

tery of our human relationships that was opening to her and you, and made both more wonderful and dear. Sometimes as you watched her swinging along, the wine of autumn in her little legs that it seemed she could not tire, her face tilted up to the wind as if she must drink of it, she seemed to you almost some one that you had never known before back there in town, with trailing skirt and bristling defences of propriety. That had been the shell of her; here the real being came to birth, the dear pagan soul that laughed to meet its brothers, the sun and the wind. And when she splashed white feet in a brook, as a precaution all trampers take, they were Dryad feet, and you caught her with sudden strange alarm to your breast, as if she might vanish from you up that green, mossy cloister of the brook. But she laughed, and melted, and grew warm and silent in your arms. Then happiness that hurt for very sweetness swept over you both, and for a mile you tramped on hand in hand, nor thought to mind the farmer jogging past with apples to a cider mill.

It was somewhere in New England that you

found the barn door; but of course you have no intention of telling the exact spot. You had been tramping since morning, through pleasant, rolling country, getting finally on a back road that led up through second growth timber for some miles without sign of house nor any chance to get a peep at the country. But at noon you emerged on the other side of the divide, and a pasture slope to the left invited to a view. A cow watched with mild curiosity as you climbed over and your companion crawled under the bars. At the summit was the view — and such a view! Sweet, gentle, yet wide and windy it was: green pastures cut by even lines of trees which marked the roads, domed hills with orchards climbing up, houses here and there with mouse-gray barns, a white spire far off, a pond to the south, another smaller pond at your feet, and opening toward the sun a gentle valley between the billowing hills mile on mile to the blue distance and the faint smoke of a town. And right beside you, set on the ridge like a watch tower, was a sentinel chestnut, its upper branches scarred by the lightnings, its enormous trunk, fifteen feet in circumference

measured by your belt, looking like a pillar of granite. A low limb, itself as large as a tree, tempted, and you ate your lunch up in its shelter, swinging your legs. The map showed only five miles more to go, and there was no hurry. Why not strike out when lunch was done across that great pasture at your feet, ignoring the road?

So that was what you did. And you were filled by turns with the enthusiasm of the artist and the golfer. Such billowing stretches of close, perfect turf, hardly needing a mower, with moist, level hollows where the greens would never dry up; and then that daring pond carry, with a long brassey up the slope for a par four! Then suddenly the slender lines of an elm rose out of a corner in the wall, spread, burst into leafage, casting long, cool shadows to your feet, and you were all joy for the perfection of its springing grace, wondering if any wrist was firm yet flexible enough to sweep the image of those lines across the virgin paper. You were tireless on the grateful turf; you bounded. She said she expected you to roll over and nibble grass any moment, and you did compromise by rolling over.

And then you came to a cornfield where the giant stalks twelve feet high were not yet cut down, rustling stiffly in the wind. You took her in among them, a new experience for her, and her voice became hushed as she wandered down the narrow lanes, the world shut out, in a sort of miniature wilderness. She said it made her feel very small, as if she had eaten a bit of Alice's cake.

So, through the corn, you came unexpectedly over a little ridge and out in somebody's back yard. The house belonged to the days of the Revolution, and it was preserved in all the simple perfection of its solid outline, its few ornamentations — the Doric door frame, the Greek cornice, the heavy window-caps — in perfect repair and colored just enough in contrast to the olive brown of the wide spruce clapboards to pick them finely out. There was no flaw in the proportions of the dwelling, the great square chimney and the long roof being held up with easy grace by the simple frame, a house at once solid, beautiful, and gracious. Three giant elms as old as it arched over the house and down across the half

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acre of untrimmed lawn, gay here and there with golden glow in careless, frosty flower, three giant lindens guarded the stone wall by the road. And standing in the Doric portico of this perfect house, this dwelling that by its beauty of line and color and setting put to shame alike for dignity or loveliness our modern domestic architecture however opulent, stood a tow-headed girl of seven, barefooted, with frock none too clean, and stared at you with large-eyed, silent wonder.

The collie that came bounding out of the house was not silent, however. He had the ill manners of the country dog, and barked about your feet till a sharp voice reprimanded him from the left. You turned to see a man with a hoe in the barn door. But his back was not bent down. Far from it; he apologized for his dog with the smiling ease of a man accustomed to be listened to. You spoke enthusiastically of the house and he looked at it himself a moment before addressing his reply to your companion, with a subtle flattery that was perhaps wholly unconscious. "Yes," he said, "they done a good job with that house. A hundred and thirty-one years and the j'ists

still sound. My wife wanted some gimcracks and a vee-randa plastered on out front till an architect chap came along an' told her the house was better off without 'em. She would n't believe me." Here he turned to you, leaning on his hoe, and grinned. "Funny things, women," he said, "ain't they?"

The tow-headed girl had come shyly up to him, half hiding behind his leg as she stared at you. "Some day Betty here 'll want a vee-randa," he continued, taking her by the hand. "And if I'm alive, by Gol, I s'pose she 'll git it!"

You and your companion laughed as the two of them moved toward the house. And then the barn-door vista caught your sight. It was a big barn, neat as a picture-book, and you looked between walls of dim, golden hay, through the shadows, to the smaller door at the other end, and saw framed there in all the crystal brightness of an autumn afternoon what was most beautiful in your magic pasture, the waving crest of yellow corn, the roll of velvet slopes, a perfect elm springing up and, far beyond, the hill with its sentinel chestnut, a green watch tower stand-

ing up against the sky. In silence you gazed, and then each sought the other's eyes to read the pleasure there. You moved to the left beyond the barn — a cattle run intruded, then a hen-coop and too much corn, spoiling the composition. You moved to the right — the barn itself cut off half the view. You came back again and looked through the dusky walls of hay — and there was the picture, perfectly composed, the soul of the pasture caught. There followed a passage of learned words, psychological speculations, talk of Ruskin's theory about the need in a painting of some point that lets the vision out. She told of the pleasure she had all her life found in paintings that showed a window and the view through it, especially if that view were bright and colorful and the interior dim, of her joy as a little girl in a drawing of the Lady of Shalott where the tiny reflection of the knights riding by down the highway "two by two" shimmered in the mirror. You replied with the memory of a picture in some book that depicted a man and a woman in a dim old stage-coach, while through the coach window a country landscape lay white under

dazzling snow, a picture that in your childhood had always fascinated you. You both wondered why no painter that you could recall had ever put such a barn-door vista as this on his canvas, this heavy, dusky frame of the humble accentuating the magic view set like a gem in its centre, this perfect little landscape bursting in with a flood of light and color between the dim walls of golden hay. Then turning you observed that, morning, noon, or twilight, as the farmer came from his side door or his wife stood on the soapstone step, the picture met their gaze fair and full, was a part of the fragrance which floated out from the hay.

In the silence that followed you both thought the same thoughts, and knew you did, for speech was often needless between you two. But by and by she put those thoughts into words, leaning softly against your side. "The glory and the beauty of the world!" she said. "We must press them into a few brief weeks and take them back, only a memory, into that great ugly city over there somewhere." She lifted her arm to point southward, and let it drop heavily again.

“Think, think of Broadway, how it smells; and the buildings and the people, and then Harlem and the ugly miles of sardine boxes men and women call homes!”

“Don’t think of them, dear,” you said. But there was no conviction in your tone. And somehow your feet were heavy as you set out down the highway — southward. A backward look showed the simple, perfect house beneath its guarding trees, the mouse-gray barn, the magic pasture rolling away into the blue distance. “Some day!” you whispered. A soft hand stole into yours, and then thoughts too sweet for utterance walked with you down the long white road.

Moosilauke is a noble mountain, even if it is absurdly easy of ascent. Its blue bulk walls in the southern end of the Ham Branch intervale with an almost grandiloquent self-sufficiency. It needs no spurs nor ranges to complete the job. Yet without trouble it fits into a barn-door vista, a topaz in a setting of golden hay. When you walk up from the wide meadows, the shaggy slopes of Cannon and Kinsman bearing down

upon you, the sensation of space and height on all your senses, and look at Moosilauke through the barn, it is as if your spacious landscape were viewed through the wrong end of a spy glass. The mountain has become a miniature. But it is a miniature clear in outline, perfect in detail, bursting in through the dusty gloom.

So I was viewing it the other morning and reflecting on the barn-door vistas of other days, when a voice roused me. "I wondered how long it would be," said the voice, "before you discovered it."

"Only long enough to let you find it first," I answered. "Do you remember —"

"Do I remember?" — the voice was close to me now. "Why do you think I chose this place?"

"But you never mentioned it."

The voice was very close now. "Ah!" it said, "if I had had to I — I — O, never let me have to, never, never!"

I think I never shall.



II ROADS



ONE of the pathetic features of a large city is the fact that so many of the streets are numbered. A numbered street loses caste and dignity as a numbered person would. Consider the relative effect on the imagination of "West Forty-ninth" and "Great Jones" Street! Fifth Avenue has achieved an international fame, and rises above its number. But compare the imaginative quality of "Fourth Avenue" and "King's Highway" — most mouth-filling and splendid of appellations! I dare say you would be disappointed if you should see King's Highway, as you may do on the trip to Coney Island. But its name

gives it a dignity and a suggestion of an historic past which no Long Island realty company can quite take away from it, build they never so many rows of uniform frame "homes."

No street, however, comes truly into its own until it shakes off the dust of town and lapses into a state of nature, becoming a road. Once a road, a name does n't so much matter. Becoming one with the large, simple things of the country, it can assert its own dignity and charm without a tag. In the country you do not ask the name of the farmer jogging along; his face is shrewd and kindly, and you speak to him anyway, perhaps get a lift for a mile or two and gossip familiarly. Nor do you care what the name of the road is, if by chance it had one back somewhere in town where it started. It is pleasant and companionable, and ultimately will get you somewhere. Or if it does n't, so much the better.

I say, so much the better; but I am not always sure. Roads have an endless variety of allurements, and sometimes it is their suggestion of destination which charms, sometimes their mystery. Which is better depends on your individual mood.

When I was a boy we lived on Andover Road, and that was an infinite satisfaction. Andover, with its great elms, its brooding, quiet stretches of shadow and old brick buildings, ivy-covered, the dimly comprehended thunder of its theological guns, best of all its school, mighty in football, and some day to receive me as a pupil, was a spot never to be too much dreamed about. In those days there were no trolleys nor motors, nor even bicycles, and Andover was a long way off up the broad, dusty turnpike. The tramp to the swimming-hole brought it two miles nearer, and even now, as I write the name, there comes back to me the old thrill which I always experienced when, by the bend at the Deacon Sanborn farm, I greeted the groggy signboard which lifted itself with difficulty out of the briers to announce:

ANDOVER 8 MILES.

From that point the turnpike ran north down across the Hundred Acre Meadows, straight as an arrow. Paolo, in Stephen Phillips's play, is torn with a desire to "run down the white road to Rimini." And I, too, before I turned aside to

the swimming-hole, used to know that desire, though my Francesca was a position on the football team. It is doubtful, however, if Paolo paid much attention to the road, save as a means to an end. I, having more time, knew every stone and wayside bush northward from my home. They were important because they were on Andover Road.

But in other moods, the charm of the unknown road, the invitation to explore, is the more alluring. To know where a road goes too often accompanies a masterful and exclusive desire to get there. Not to know where a road goes and still to take it, means that you are in that blissful state of nonchalance and wonder, so characteristic of the child and so provocative of shy surprises, quiet enjoyments, intimate touch with nature and her beauties. A country boyhood filled my memory with a background of winding roads, of gray barns and wayside wells, of dark stretches under the pines where the feet crunched softly on brown needles and last week's rain lay in puddles, of crossway signboards and dusty raspberries. So, to me, as I explore summer

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after summer the soft New England countryside — on foot — there is a stir of old memory with every new surprise, every present beauty; and the unknown road calls me irresistibly, therefore. I now have been to Andover (and did not make even the second eleven!). But down the next uncharted byway may lurk the perfect view of Moosilauke, or there may be that not impossible abandoned farm which fills the contradictory requirements of the entire family, or only a winding ribbon of dust over a hill which will look like Huckleberry Hill. And just why that will give me so much pleasure I cannot tell you; but it will bring me peace and thoughts of my grandfather, and the remembered fragrance of fresh milk with the dark berries bobbing about in it. Shall we have no pleasure of the road after we have been to Carcasonne? As life advances, the little mysteries loom larger. Perhaps Shakespeare, after he retired to Stratford, took his greatest interest in his roses, and his morning walk down the garden path was his Great Adventure.

The pleasures of the unknown road are many and varied. First among them, of course, is the

pleasure of the curve. I have taken a curve in an automobile. Doubtless it was a very beautiful curve, but what I was aware of was a hoarse honking, a lurch, the crunch of gravel, the mutter of the owner about tire repairs and "these abominable country roads"; and then the renewed monotony of watching a white ribbon rushing to meet me. That is not the way to know the pleasure of the curve. As you approach it on foot, you pause. You notice first, perhaps, the beauty of its line, a living line swept on the green canvas of the earth with one sure turn of a giant wrist. Then you notice anew the wayside foliage, thrown into prominence ahead because, on the curve, you face it. There is every shade of green, from blackest fir to brightest emerald. The hemlocks bank their layers of rich, heavy shadow; behind them rises a birch in virgin white and frail, translucent green; and behind that a giant chestnut thrusts up boldly against the blue sky. Perhaps between is a glimpse of the mountains, or a pasture ridge. Then you let your eye follow the curve of the road once more. It flows with its beautiful line, checkered with

shadow, into the woods, through the Gate of the Cedars. And here the mystery allures once more. What lies beyond that curve? What vista awaits down the cool aisle of the evergreens? How far and how well will you fare? So then you resume your tramping, and, if your stride is good and you possess imagination, as you swing around the curve you can get the thrill of it, that peculiar thrill of counteracting centrifugal force, without resort to a motor-car, and without the sacrifice of those delicate beauties and quiet allurements of the bended road.

It is surprising, as you walk, what a tiny symphony of sounds detach themselves from the large hum of nature and peep or shrill or rustle at you along the way. There is the incessant snaffle of grasshoppers around your feet when you brush close to the margin; the shrill of crickets, at night a sleepy, peaceful, antiphonal chorus; the soft scurry of little things in the hedges; the rustle of a snake into the dead leaves by the edge of the swamp; the rattle of a stick kicked down by a chipmunk as he scampers along the stone wall, scolding; the extraordinarily high

Phee, phee, phee of the Pickering frogs in the wayside pools in April; the tap of a woodpecker; the call of a chickadee, most friendly of birds, waiting in the hickories to greet the passer. And always from June to August along unfrequented ways in the north, especially in Franconia, there lurks the possibility of a hermit thrush.

Once Stella and I climbed Mt. Agamenticus, and as we tumbled down the trail through the woods Stella pealed out the Valkyries' call, Ho-jo-to-ho-o! — the augmented fifth ringing clear and wild in the stillness of the uplands. Just as we reached the road and she paused for breath, there came an answer from the thicket, sweet and true and without a hint of the Valkyries' wildness, yet just now curiously defiant. We laughed, and Stella pealed again. Once more the thrush answered, with his fresh and exquisitely controlled voice. Where have I heard his song likened to an accordion going by in the air? This song was not like that. This thrush went up the octave scattering triplets with the measured precision of formal melody written for wood-wind, yet with supreme joy of the grace and sponta-

neity of the performance — Mozart defying Wagner.

“ I give up ! ” cried Stella, and we left the bird triumphant in his thicket.

The unknown road, as it winds along, is a perpetual garden, wild roses, lambkill, Joe-Pye-weed, wild raspberry, asters, goldenrod, filling the summer through, not to mention the berries which you eat as well as look at; and now and again in some melancholy cellar hole at the base of a charred brick chimney, the flaming fireweed which blooms in the path of desolation. Indeed, a catalogue of roadside flowers, even in New England alone, would fill pages. Do you know toad-flax and golden ragweed (not the kind that gives hay-fever!)? And gold-thread, quaintest of little growing things, and lion's-foot, and wild lettuce? And of climbing things along the way there is always clematis and hempweed, and often bedstraw, that, overcome with the humbleness of its name perhaps, leans heavily upon other stalks, bearing its white, sticky, faintly fragrant masses of bloom. But best of all are the red bunch-berries where the pines are near, and the

fringed gentians on the uplands, bits of sky come down to earth. Who needs a garden when he can tramp the roads?

And the line of the road, too, is a perpetual revelation of beauty. From a high hilltop it dips with the grace of the curve at the crest of a waterfall, into the woods, and is lost to view. It seems to flow away from under your feet. You look out over the trees to a valley, checkered with green pastures and brown squares of ploughed land, with here and there a white house, and suddenly a mile away you spy your road again, emerging from the woods and beckoning you up over the next slope. Down in the valley it takes on another aspect. It is the line that carries the eye out of the picture. Shut in by the hills, there would be something a little oppressive about this quiet green bowl but for the friendly road. That climbs steadily over the slope, laying down its white ribbon between the pastures, and, letting out the eye, lets out the imagination, tells of things beyond. So long as its graceful line breaks over the crest, you are content to abide here for a spell, to eat your lunch

and chat with the small boy who comes out of the big red barn.

He is not a Will-o'-the-mill. Armies have not marched past on that road, tanned about the eyes, nor great coaches gone rumbling down to a far city on the plain. It is nothing but the Athol road, and he has been to Athol — knows where you can get fishin' tackle there. — What? Bless the boy, he's been to Boston, too! An' seen the State House, an' the Bunker Hill Monument, an' the Common, *an'* the Harvards play baseball! Nowadays, alas, all roads lead to Carcassonne, and there are no illusions any more!

No illusions? Not caring for Athol, we hopefully take this other road to the left, through the woods, and presently it bends by a row of elms and maples, giant trees which show, between, a smooth-cut meadow and opposite a man laying brown ribbons with a plough under a cloud-dome. Then it leads us past a square, substantial farmhouse, past another and yet another, and suddenly grows narrow, while the tell-tale grass appears between the wheel-ruts. But still we hopefully keep on, up the hill, till without warn-

ing the road runs casually into the front door of a farmhouse and disappears. We go round the house and look for it again, but it is not there; nothing there but chickens, raspberries, and dish-water.

“What have you done with the road?” we demand of the boy who comes peering from the wood-shed.

For a moment he hesitates. Then a grin breaks over his face. “Paw used it fer beddin’ las’ winter,” he drawls, “it’s so soft.”

We are wise and cease the contest. “Is there no way on?” we ask, humbly.

“’Pends on whar you want ter git.”

“Anywhere — the next town.”

“Hain’t no next town. You kin hit a loggin’ trail down ter the Great Swamp, an’ then you kin strike over ter the railroad, ef you don’ mind gittin’ wet.”

So we go back, but without anger at the Run-away Road. One is never angry at a road. If one takes the wrong road when he really wants to reach a definite place, it is his fault for not asking the way or carrying a map. Going back,

the roadside vistas are different, seen from the reverse; even the coloring in the foliage, the shadows on the fields, take on a different aspect. But the way seems shorter. Landmarks are familiar, and the eye jumps ahead from one to the other with certainty of the distance. Then, too, the sense of curiosity, the tense mood of expectation, is at rest. So, if the legs are not weary, the ten miles home are always less than the ten miles out. Besides, you have made friends with the road, and the walk with a friend is always shorter. I admit that I greet a new road with almost as much pleasure as a new person, and usually part from it with rather more regret.

The friendly road! Two pictures come back to me, one out of childhood, one out of yesterday. It was night, the deep, starlit, hushed night of the mountain intervalles. And I, a little boy, stole away from the buzz of talk on the veranda and scurried up the road, so familiar by day, so sandy, but now curiously smooth and hard under my feet. (Later in life I used to notice that a road the bicyclist cursed by day, picking his path, seemed smooth enough as he bowled along in the

dark; which thing is a parable.) The black wall of mountains to the left grew terribly like a great wave as I ran along — a great wave that seemed to be rushing upon me. But I climbed up the hill, comforting myself with a bravado whistle. At the top of the hill the road swept past sentinel cedars like black spires pointing to the stars, and ran into the woods, so that it soon showed but a ghostly white patch ahead of me. I slowed down to a timid walk, my nerves a-quiver. Suddenly there was a terrific noise in the darkness side of me. I turned and ran. It was only the stamping of horses in a stable — that I realized the next day; indeed, I almost knew it then — with my head. But my head was not in control. I ran in foolish, unreasoned terror. I remember how that white, ghostly patch of road gleamed ever ahead of me, with friendly help and comfort. At the sentinel cedars I again saw the ridge of the mountains. The moon was just coming up behind them, and the firs on their summits were shot with silver, like the foam on a wave-crest. The illusion of a great breaker curling over upon our valley was overpowering. For an instant I

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stood paralyzed with terror, conquered by my own imagination. Then I saw my friendly white road stretching down to the distant lights of the house. And, with a little cry, I raced madly down it, back to the buzz of talk. The next day the road looked as commonplace as before, but ever after it has held a warm spot in my affections, like a human thing.

The picture of yesterday is framed by the branches of an apple-tree. There came first a complaint about skirts, wherein our apple-tree differed from the first and most famous! But once up in the spreading boughs, we gave ourselves over to lazy, happy contemplation of the view, while the afternoons drifted by.

The apple-tree stood in a pasture. East was a stone wall, half hidden in goldenrod and wild-rose bushes. Then the white road swept curving across the picture, from behind a little grove to the right, back behind a little hill to the left. Beyond the road the coast ledges rolled away, covered with bay and huckleberry bushes and scrub pines, till they broke against the sky. Only, in the centre, there was a depression filled in by the

blue sea, its horizon line laid down with a ruler. Always a speck of white sail moved across that patch of blue, and always at sunset time the sail took fire. Meanwhile traffic flowed around the white ribbon by the wall — automobiles with guttural honks, buckboards freighted with boarders, pedestrians, Indians with packs of sweet-grass baskets, and finally, as the sail was taking fire, always an old man driving two black cows. All this we saw from our apple-tree, while the salt air blew sweetly about us. And when the old man had driven his cows around the hill, we stepped into the white road and it led us cheerfully home to supper. How simple it sounds to tell! Yet that road touched our picture as with a gentle hand, a hand which held the green and blue beauties of the landscape closely to our human kin — and led us home to supper. We loved it like a friend.

It is curious, indeed, how closely roads are linked with humanity, how warmly companionable they are, and yet how little they ever mar the beauty, even the wildness, of a picture. That, I suppose, is because they are made of the earth

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and follow its contours, catch the rhythm and flow of nature. A snow-covered road in winter lies through the bare trees, lovely with the blue shadows of their trunks, and throws into exquisite relief the straight, slender horizontals of the second-growth saplings, the columnar aisles of the hemlocks. Catch the road in the early morning after a new fall of snow, when the sun is bright above a dazzling world and the chickadees sing, and you will find, perhaps, the tracks of a single "pung," blue as the shadows of the tree-trunks. These blue tracks say to you that some fellow has been along ahead, up before you were into the white, frosty world, with the jingle of sleigh-bells. He has left all this beauty of slender horizontals, of columnar hemlocks, of blue shadows on the white carpet, but he has left, too, thanks to the road, a blue trail which jogs you pleasantly to remember your human kin, which keeps nature linked with Man. After all, he is rather a morose and stingy lover of nature who would have it otherwise, who would banish roads from his landscape.

It was a theory in the old days that a good

road, like a straight line, was the shortest distance between two points. So the Old Portsmouth Road goes up Sewall's Hill from York Harbor, and the former road from Rowe to Charlemont in the northern Berkshires is now but a logging-trail over Mount Adams, where the fringed gentians bloom in the wheel-ruts. Newer roads follow "the lay of the land," and if you want to tramp in comfort, get a government survey map, find the roads that go straightest over the highest elevations, and take them. That Old Portsmouth Road knows not the dust of touring-cars, but it leads you past the house of a certain wise man who has built himself one of the most beautiful dwellings and one of the most adorable gardens along the coast of Maine, and built them for their own sakes, since none pass to see. The garden gate is a gap in the stone wall under an apple-tree, and the path lets in to a pool under a boulder, a tangle of ferns, and then the blaze of hollyhocks, cosmos, gladioli, and other old-fashioned blooms. The house is deep-brown stucco with an Italian roof. Trumpet-vines climb over it, and two deep orange awnings shade the door

and the ample window of the living-room. Set on a hill, you see over the tree-tops to the new road, the river, and the far-off point where the cottages face the sea, back yard touching back yard, huddled without privacy together. Then the Old Portsmouth Road runs down the hill again and you meet the cows coming home at twilight. It is good to find a man who dares place a lovely and expensive dwelling on the back road. It shows him not dependent on the opinions of his fellows. I have had the temerity to fancy that he even leaves his machine in the garage occasionally, and walks somewhere.

It would be foolish to dwell here on the sociological value of good roads, their place in the well-being and progress of mankind. Others more fitted have told of that. But has a paper ever been written on roads in literature? Certainly the word "road" would fill pages in a concordance of popular quotations. From the strait and narrow road of hortatory scripture to that which climbs in Christina Rossetti's "Up Hill," roads run through what the Race has written, almost always with allegorical purpose, a symbol

of the eternal restlessness of man, the flow and flight of human aspiration, the steady plod of time. Simple, primitive, unmistakable, roads are among the enduring things, and so wind their way through enduring literature, one of the ultimate metaphors. How full of roads is Bunyan's book! And how full of roads, in these latter days, are the novels and poems of Thomas Hardy. In the open Wessex country they are apparent from afar, and in the novels you never lose sight of them, till they become charged with significance. To think of *Jude* is to see his hungry little figure by the sign-post, looking down the long road to Oxford. Egdon Heath carries the brickly outfit of the Reddleman moving along a white trail cut sharp on the furze. And plodding figures in "*Tess*" pass and repass on endless highways, weary with you know not what tragedy. In the poems the poet's own quaint illustrations show his preoccupation with roads. Ever they are vanishing over hills, reappearing in distant valleys, ribboning the pastures. He would call them, no doubt, the trail of Man over the face of the earth. Perhaps, then, our joy of the trail

depends on our fondness for him who made it, and the road is beautiful, lead it to Carcassonne or Athol, Mass., in proportion as we are willing to share it, are glad that others have blazed it on ahead, and will follow after.

But does that philosophy compel us trampers to breathe with delight the dust of the passing motor-cars? By what new pragmatism shall we adopt them into the pleasant scheme of things? And it is a short road now which has no motor-car. Like most philosophers, I shall have to end with a riddle!



III RIVERS

IF you desire an argument for idealism, said Emerson, stoop down and look at a familiar landscape through your legs. (This, it will be recalled, was also Peter Pan's method for intimidating the wolves!) Yet Emerson need hardly have resorted to so gymnastic a feat for casting over a familiar landscape the sense of strangeness. There flows through the Concord meadows, and 'neath "the rude bridge" which spans its flood, the Concord River, incomparable for canoes, and from the seat of a gently moving craft on its dark, quiet waters you may see all that fair New England countryside through the

transforming lens of an unaccustomed viewpoint — the viewpoint, as it were, of the floor of the world.

If you walk with the shade of old Izaak Walton by the bank of a river, in quiet contemplation or busy with a rod, you may fall in love with life and flowing streams, but you will not know the true river view. You will know that only from a boat, preferably a noiseless, smooth-slipping canoe, because only from the boat is your level of vision altered from the habitual, lowered till all the common objects of the landscape shift their values and the world is indeed so strange a place that you realize, as Emerson intended, how many of our so-called facts are merely habits of the human eye. We have often suspected that Bishop Berkeley himself was a traveller by inland waterways, and drew his philosophy from the river view.

Did you ever lie stretched on your garden path, shutting the eye farther from the ground and squinting with the other through the strange jungle of your flower-beds? The sensation is curious, almost disconcerting. The pebbles on

the path cast long shadows, the bordering grasses are tall, and the stalks of your daffodils tower like a pine wood, while the sun shines through amid the translucent green trunks, bringing down a shimmer of golden blooms. See, a robin hops into the picture! You know him for a robin by his rosy breast and his brittle legs. But how huge he is! You are scarce aware of the sky, and of your neighbors' houses, even of so much of your own garden as lies beyond this little field of your earth-bound vision, you are not aware at all. You feel curiously like Gulliver in Brobdingnag. As you rise to your feet, you are tempted to rub your eyes, like one awakening from a dream.

This, on a larger scale and enhanced by the charm of moving boat and lapping water, is the sensation of him who journeys by a little waterway through the meadows and the hills. A well-behaved river is bound to be lower than its banks, so that sometimes your head, as you sit in your canoe, is actually below the floor of the world, sometimes on its level, but seldom or never above it. What a transformation this works on the

landscape! Step into your craft, dip your paddle, glide out on the current, and the flowers and grasses on the bank, scarce noted before, are suddenly the rich foreground of your picture. They are larger, more intricate, more beautiful, than you ever guessed. The cardinal flowers and Joe-Pye-weed lift their blooms against the blue sky, instead of lying at your feet. The delicate designs of their petals emerge like a snow-flake on velvet. As you glide under arching willows or maples, you seem to be in the depth of a forest. The road or the trolley line may be but a few hundred yards away, yet you do not see them. You float silently up a liquid aisle beneath vaulted foliage, in a sufficient and cloistered world of your own.

It may be presently you catch the sparkle of bright sunlight on the water ahead, and emerging from the mottled shadows of the woods your canoe slips into a stretch of river where tall grasses come down to the black, oozy banks. An old punt, half full of yellow water, is moored to a stake. Out in the fields you hear the hot click, click of a mowing machine, drowsier than a

locust's song at summer noon. Men are near, no doubt horses, a road, perhaps a town. But you do not see them. You see only the old punt, the tall grasses on the bank, it may be the top of a far blue hill peeping over, and ahead the quiet waterway wandering again into the cool shadows of the maples. Those hayfields might stretch to infinity for all you can say. Your view of the world is not comprehensive; it is the view of the worm rather than the bird. But how alluring is its strangeness, how restful its seclusion, between grassy banks under the dome of the summer sky! Even the ways of the worm may be pleasant, then — a fact worth finding out.

Presently there is a rustle in the grasses, and a small boy stands over you, staring down, a one-piece bamboo fishpole towering in his hand. His body cuts against the sun, and, see, he has an aura in his hair!

Always there is this strangeness of the river way to give it perpetual allure. Do you meet with a fisherman sitting on the bank, it is his feet you see first. Always the bordering grasses are important, and how large the sky, how flat and

restricted the plain when the banks sink down to give a glimpse of it! Passing under a bridge, the dust disturbed by a rumbling motor overhead shakes down upon you or tinkles on the water — sweetest of tiny sounds, this tinkle of dust on still water! It is as if you were in another world, below your human kind in space, but not, you are sure, in degree, so gently your craft slips along amid the cloistered beauties of the stream.

“In the garden,” writes Emerson in his “Journal,” “the eye watches the flying cloud and Walden Woods, but turns from the village. Poor Society! what hast thou done to be the aversion of us all?” But need Society be our aversion because sometimes we turn from it in weariness to the contemplation of Walden Woods or the river way, or because our spirit recognizes in itself a primal kinship not alone with Society but with Solitude as well, with whispering waters and Joe-Pye-weed and the tall grass that nods against the sky?

“What do they know of England who only England know?”

And what do we know of Society who know nothing of Solitude? He sees not the battle best who is in the brunt of it. He is not the master of his social relations whose every idea and action is born of human intercourse, because he is not the master of his own soul; he has ignored its relations to the primal and inanimate, its capacity for contemplation. "All great deeds," said Martineau, "are born of solitude." It is in solitude that the thought matures. It is in the face of his origins that what is trivial in man is disclosed to his questioning spirit. Let him go and contemplate rivers, and be ashamed of the size of last Sunday's newspapers!

For ever a river "addresses the imagination and the interrogating soul." The population of cities is a dull study to the boy, but the length of the Nile is poetry. Geography is a less interesting study to the child of to-day than it was to our fathers just in so far as the map of Africa has lost those delightful pink portions marked "unexplored," and the upper reaches of its rivers lost their dotted lines which indicated the Unknown. The boy is not greatly impressed by the

size of the wheat crop of the United States, but what boy would not defend the size of the Mississippi against the world? A river comes from the Unknown, from the high hills and the forest, and it moves as irresistibly as a planet to the Unknown again, to the sea. It speaks forever the mystery of its origin and of its destination. Like a road, it calls perpetually to the imagination because it is going somewhere. But, unlike a road, there is no hint of man in its composition. It is the leader always. Man follows panting on its bank, and lays his roads where the river has been the primal engineer.

We are all familiar with the river's calm and assured position in the centre of the picture. Whether it is the Rhine coming down through vine-terraced hills, or the magnificent Hudson sweeping out of the blue north into the view of those tenement-towered heights of upper Manhattan, or the Housatonic curling through the meadows of Stockbridge ringed by purple hills, or the sluggish Charles gay with canoes amid the lawns of Dedham, or the Wild Ammonoosuc chattering out from the forests of Moosilauke

and fighting its way through rugged intervalles to reach the Connecticut, the view is always composed around the river — and no matter how high you climb to contemplate, widening your horizon, ever does that silver thread of water bind the landscape into a perfect whole.

So it is that man's roads winding by its banks, or his glittering steel rails following its curves, seem but to trail the primitive pioneer — as, indeed, is the fact — and where the river, with magnificent sweep and power, ploughs its way through the hills the glittering rails plunge after, with a kind of joy of exploration, as if they cried: "We shall follow it and see what comes!" Small wonder the river dominates the imagination, and to the boy is the most delectable thing in geography. Even that brook behind his house somewhere joins the sea. He may launch a chip on its surface for a voyage of a thousand miles. What is the population of Algeria before such a living marvel as this?

When I was a boy our baseball field was on the summit of an almost imperceptible divide. A spring at the southern end sent a diminutive

trickle down through a meadow where white violets grew, into the discolored waters of the "town brook," and thence ultimately into the Saugus River. A second spring at the northern end sent a diminutive trickle through the muddy ooze of Duck Pond into the cranberry bog of Birch Meadow, and thence through three miles of white pine forest — now, alas! no more — into the long, forest-bordered reaches of the Hundred Acre meadows, where the Ipswich River wound its sinuous way, with sluggish bottoms where the hornpout bit and gravel pools where we swam. I can remember as it were yesterday the day when I studied in my geography about a divide, and realized with a thrill of joy that Kingman's field was such a thing. I raced home from school. I ran first to the southern spring, then to the northern, and told myself that each was the headwater of a river! It was my hour to stand "silent upon a peak in Darien." My childish imagination followed those trickles in the grass till my body was borne in a great boat on their mighty waters and my ears heard the sound of the sea. Geography for me had sud-

denly become alive, tingling — had suddenly become poetry. I waited with burning impatience for Saturday, to follow my northward running brook, muddy and torn and scratched, through the bogs and the pine woods, till it joined the Ipswich. And then I stood on a tuft of grass in the swampy bottom where the two streams met and yearned for a craft to carry me down the larger body past grandfather's mill, past unknown towns, till the water tasted of the salt and the breakers boomed.

Since that far-off day, I have stood by a spring bubbling from under a boulder, and watched the thread of crystal water slip through the mosses into the depths of a mountain ravine, while tall peaks towered about me — slip away on its journey of a thousand miles to the sea. I have been at the high head of a river monarch. But I was less thrilled than the day when I first conceived that Kingman's field was a divide. Since that day, too, I have launched a boat on many rivers, but never with quite the expectant joy which attended the launching of the *Crusader*, for that long-dreamed-of trip down the Ipswich.

The *Crusader* was made at home (for every home in those days was a manual training school), with ribs of ash and a covering of canvas, painted vivid red. Carefully parting my hair in the middle, at my grandfather's solemn advice, I launched forth below the mill pond for my far voyaging, I and another boy in a rakish canoe, also home-made, called the *Stampede*. The boys in the swimming hole came racing out like dolphins about our prows, but we beat them off with paddles, and sailed away into a land of wonder. How each river bend ahead lured us on — bends where the willows arched over the water, or a birch dropped a white reflection into the black depths, or the current seemed to widen, grow more sluggish, promising perhaps a mill pond, the excitement of a "carry," the thrill of a strange village! No mystery is quite like the mystery of a river bend, as no curve is quite so beautiful. When you are a boy on your first river voyage you do not pray for an arrow-like course, you welcome each curve and double as a fresh revelation of romance. When the river bend has lost its charm, then you may know you

are middle-aged, indeed, and fit only for automobiles and a luxurious hotel at night.

What memories come back to him who has travelled by river ways, of camps regretfully left behind or human scenes which he has floated past, ethereal as a dream! There is always a wistful moment of parting from a pleasant camp, on tiny island or wooded bank. You rise before the sun is free of the valley fog, plunge in the cold water, catch a fish, perhaps, build up the fire in last night's embers, and while the coffee boils you look down the river way which beckons, cool and strange in the light before the day. The great trees on the bank behind you rise ethereal, phantom shadows against the ochre dawn. The fire snaps yellow and warm. Ahead the stream winds into the mystery of the morning. You eat your breakfast, strike your tent, load the canoes, douse the embers, which sizzle pathetically, and with a backward glance of gratitude at your inn beneath the stars you slip down the current for a new day's adventures. No officious landlord comes out to the curb to say good-by. No bell-hop is seen running to you with a morning paper

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and an eye hungry for tips. What the world is doing you neither know nor care. The morning mists are rising from the water. The stream lies clear ahead. The sun is golden on the distant hills. And your paddle digs the water till the little boat leaps with the joy of health and freedom.

Or it may be that twilight steals upon you while you are still paddling in search of a camping place free of the haunts of men, of towns and befouling mills. In the gathering darkness you see lights on the water ahead, hear the sounds of music and voices. Presently you have glided into fairyland. Lawns come down to the water, gay with Japanese lanterns. The landings are decked with color. Canoes are floating in procession, like bright water flies, with lamps at prow and stern. As your dark and travel-soiled craft shoots into the radius of these lights, the faces of girls flash at you, you hear the tinkle of their laughter, you move through the fairy scene and pageantry as through a dream, thrilling strangely to its human joy, yet strangely not a part of it, passing on to your lonely camp in the woods be-



Ahead the stream winds into the mystery of the morning. *See page 53*

low. Such scenes remain in the memory when much else that seemed more important to our lives has faded and vanished, and they come back to us out of the past with a wistful sweetness, ever more beautiful with the years.

The "ingenious Spaniard," quoted by Izaak Walton says that, "rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration." But we ourselves are not entirely convinced that the man who contemplates too habitually the inhabitants, truly contemplates the rivers. We have come upon the feet of many an angler, dangling over the bank, and lifted our eyes to a face whereon was writ less calm contemplation than annoyance at our disturbance of the water, or a sportsman's patient, stolid eagerness for game. We are far from persuaded that the average fisherman is a contemplative man at all, though it be heresy to harbor the doubt. Some of them are. So are many men who never fish. But, after all, to do anything well requires concentration on your task, and we venture to affirm that nobody can cast a fly successfully in an alder

thicket or under low-spreading maples or hemlocks whose mind is filled with philosophic reflections upon the destination of the stream or the beauty of the banks. Neither, we venture to affirm, is the patient watching of a cork on the water consistent with that breadth of vision, freedom of fancy and sensory alertness demanded by true contemplation. Contemplation of an inhabitant of the watery element means to the average angler one thing — what is the best way to haul him out? Contemplation of the river — which is the best pool for fish? No, the wise man who would truly contemplate rivers walks by their banks, if they will not float a canoe, or launches his craft upon them if they be deep enough, nor does he feel that he knows them until he has seen the world from their angle, from this curious viewpoint below the brink, and until he has followed them up into the hills whence they come and down toward the sea whither they go. You do not know a river till you have become one with its current, a part of its life, winding with it through the meadows and fighting with it through the barriers of rock.

It is a curious fact which all sensitive observers must have noted that you get almost no "feel" of the contours of a country from the tonneau of an automobile. The sag of the springs, the extreme speed, the ease of the spurt up a hill, the rolling away of the landscape, the rush of the road to meet you, all combine to destroy that sense of local difference between one valley and the next. Of the delicate pleasures of roadside flowers and lovely vistas down logging roads and bird calls and wayfarers' greetings, of course you get nothing at all. That is why some of us, to the extreme perplexity of the rest of us, take to our feet on the back roads.

But even more intimately than from the winding highway, travelled afoot, the country discloses its subtler aspects to him who journeys down its rivers by canoe. A road goes arbitrarily, often, where man has willed. A river finds by the first law of its nature the bottom land, it draws in to itself ultimately all roads and ways of man, and from its surface one looks perpetually up, instead of now up, now down, getting a constant, unchanging perspective on everything

within the field of vision, which cannot err or falsify. Whose house is set the higher on a hill? From the river you shall have no doubt. Those blue huddled hills and intersecting valleys resolve themselves out of confusion into the assured familiarity of a map, to the river voyager. He has, on the very scale of nature itself, one of those raised maps so dear to the heart of boyhood, and he is sailing through the heart of it. Perpetually ahead lies the beckoning bend or the long vista of river-valley opening between the hills. Perpetually to right and left are timbered slopes or grassy uplands, now and again parting to proclaim a tributary, threaded with roads that seem ever to be coming down to speak to you in your canoe, to bring you news of the countryside. When you pass through a town, it is through the intimate life of the back yards, not down its formal main street; you view it in its shirt-sleeves, as it were, you catch it off its guard, its houses faced the other way, their back roofs peeping at you over the trees, while paths come down as if to watch you pass. Once more, the river view has the charm of

strangeness, reveals the world to you from a different angle.

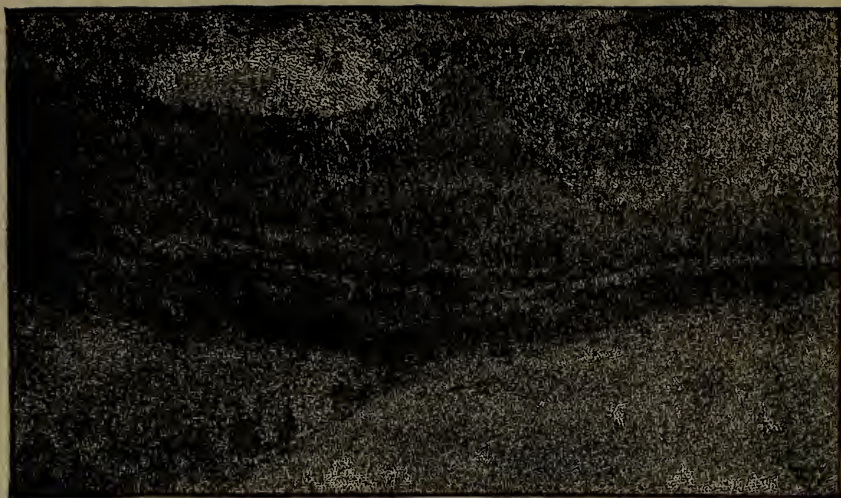
“ Poor Society! What hast thou done to be the aversion of us all? ” This thou hast done. Thou has cast us and kept us in moulds of convention, in starched collars and paved streets and stuffy house (or, more often, in flats!); in habits of vision and of speech; thou hast compelled us too often to forget our own souls in the bicker of market-place or assembly. This thou hast done because it is a law of our nature to herd with our kind, to fight for things material, to create art and sky-scrapers and fine clothes and grand opera and high tariffs and slums and creeds and all sorts of jumbled wisdom and folly. But it is a law of our nature, too, sometimes to revolt, to throw ourselves back on the bosom of the Inanimate, to cry out not for art but the huddle of hills into the sunset and the song of a thrush, not for sky-scrapers but the ranks of the towering pines, not for paved streets and trolley cars, but the soft seduction of a little river.

A pipe, a box of matches, a hatchet, a little tent, a rod and line, blankets, a coffee-pot and frying

pan, a jug of water, a box of food, an old shirt, a canoe and the right companion to handle the bow-paddle, and in the ethereal river mists of a summer morning you launch your craft where the stream breaks out of its mountain cradle, and without need of map or compass give yourself gladly to its care until, perhaps, it joins the sea. It is a new world you shall see, through the magic lens of your lowered perspective, a world wherein many humble things are important and many great things shrink to insignificance. You shall pass through the haunts of men and care not for them. You shall camp in the fragrance of hemlocks and scatter the embers of your fire with regret. You shall make for the bend ahead with the joy of a discoverer, for the bend where the black water steals mysteriously into the green, sun-flecked aisles of the forest, and your talk is hushed, your paddle muffled, till you creep in as silently as the moccasined Indian on the trail, as noiselessly as the water itself, or for the bend where the river, larger now, sweeps round a promontory covered with maples, all their shadowed symmetry backed by the blue sky, into the

promise of sun-filled meadows and the languor of a summer day. Hour by hour the glide of the boat shall lull you, and when at twilight you climb stiff-legged out and rising upon the bank see the sky suddenly shrink, the world grow larger and familiar again, the grassy banks become once more not a bounding wall but a small thing at your feet, the water shall still whisper a lullaby, running past you all the night.

And presently you shall go back to your Society — since there, after all, is probably your ultimate place — with a new light, if ever so feeble, on what is important in it and what trivial, and the wistful memory of your nights beneath the stars and your days on the bosom of the kindly stream. Such is the true contemplation of rivers. It has little to do with angling, after all. It is born of the impulse of solitude and the instinct in man to wander from the hills to the sea, on the track of those primal forces which are greater than he, which grant him a new glimpse of beauty or awake an old romance, which stir in his imagination the vast and steadying images of his origin.



IV

THE LANDSCAPE THAT FLOWS



THE little boy kneeling on the seat of a car and looking out of the window, while the soles of his boots point at the other passengers or muddy the gown of the woman next to him, is a symbol of that curiosity which has conquered the universe for Man, and of that mysterious pictorial sense which has discovered the universe to be beautiful. Because a window frames a view, because it isolates some section of the landscape, inviting detailed attention, windows serve quite as much to let the eye and the fancy out as to let the air and sunshine in. When the window is a car window it isolates each moment a differ-

ent bit of the pleasant world, it frames a constantly changing panorama of scenery. The landscape flows past with ever new surprises. Whether for the little boy excited by the adventure of travel and the wonders of fresh towns and countryside, or for the man whose interest in "this goodly frame, the earth" has not been dulled nor his primitive curiosity satiated, a railroad journey is a trip through nature's picture-gallery, square after square of landscape flowing past, stark drawings in the realistic style where factories huddle and chimneys flare, alternating with the sun-swept distances of a Turner or the domestic hillsides, crowned with azure sky, of an Alden Weir.

I shall never forget my first glimpse of the South. It was through a car window, in cotton time. School books and "Dixie" had filled my boyish imagination with the thought of cotton growing, of darkies singing as they picked, of the romance and charm of plantation scenes. It was dark when we left Washington, and I was put to bed at Fredericksburg, with the picture of two long, lank men in slouch hats, men differ-

ent from any my Northern experience knew, standing on the platform in the light of a smoky lamp, as my last recollection before slumber came, a preliminary excitation. When I woke up it was broad day. I pulled up the shade and looked out. Cotton!

We were rolling through great fields of cotton, bursting open on its low bushes like snow blown over the red soil. Negroes in gay handkerchiefs were moving between the rows, picking. Beyond the fields were ranks of Southern pines. The picture changed suddenly. The pines were closer. In among them stood the gray, weathered cabins of the negroes, thin smoke ascending from each straight up in the still air, faintly blue against the long needles of the pines; then more fields of cotton, stretching away. I was indescribably thrilled. It was as if I had gone to sleep in my native North, and suddenly waked up into a picture-book world, long dreamed of and desired. To this day I go South by the night train in cotton time, to wake up for that picture, and always I greet it with a thrill — the blown snow on the red fields, the negroes picking, the

pinetrees and the cabin smoke, framed by the car window.

One of the joys of a train journey is the opportunity it affords to pass from one season to another, almost from one world to another, in the space even of a few hours. It is sometimes difficult to view New England from a car window, because of the New England car windows. But even there the railroads are becoming radical, more generous with soap and water. Not long ago I left New York in what the calendar proclaimed was a winter day. There was no other authority. A warm, sticky rain was falling on warm, sticky pavements. There was no sign of snow. One perspired in an overcoat. For a time I looked at the advertising signs along the track, which obviated the necessity of buying a magazine. Between theatrical posters, corset proclamations and the allurements of suspenders peeped muddy roads, squalid houses, dump-heaps and factories — the spawn of the city. The sticky rain fell dismally. I retired finally into my newspaper. I was not up that morning to the Emersonian task of finding the rose of beauty on the brow of chaos.

Suddenly I was aroused by the exclamation of a woman in the next chair. I looked out. The rain had ceased. We were running into a wonder-world of crystal ice. A few moments more and the sun came out. The advertising signs had been left behind. Woods and fields came down to the track. And every tree, every bush, every blade of grass, every fence and wall and wire was covered with ice flashing its prismic colors. The little virgin birches were brazenly bowed with diamonds. Every shift of the scene brought a new and more dazzling splendor into the frame of the car window.

Presently white flashed into the frame. We were out of the world of frozen rain into the world of winter snow. As we rolled along the high embankment over the Deerfield meadows the window held an exquisite view of that incomparable of villages. Its one street lay clearly marked on the dazzling carpet of the interval. The great elms, which in summer completely hide the dwellings beneath, were bare now, and each old house, square and solid, was heavily thatched with snow. The red brick museum gave the one

touch of warm color. There was not even a sleigh in sight as this picture persisted a moment in the frame. The meadows stretched away white and bare and silent as when the Indians stole across them almost two centuries ago. The peace of the dead was over the town. Another instant, and the picture melted behind. The bustle of a junction station succeeded — the rush of excited life.

Then once more we plunged into the white world of snow, till, as the sun sank low in the west, the window framed a dark, spruce-clad mountain wearing a pink hood, the mountain cold crept whistling in through the ventilators, and at twilight we stepped out into two feet of drift, to be informed that the thermometer was three degrees above zero.

“It’s warmin’ up considerable,” said the stage driver, casually. “It was twenty-six below this mornin’.”

The day’s ride in a train, with its landscape pictures flowing past, may be a lesson in geography to the little boy, or an essay on Nature and Society to the man. You wake up, perhaps, in

a dim world that rolls away in high hills. Farms have pushed their clearings up amid the timber, or hamlets cluster in a valley. The lights of early morning twinkle in the houses. Some farmer is dressing by lamp-light. Perhaps you dressed by lamp-light to catch the train. Perhaps you only recall, as you lie in your berth and rub your eyes awake, those far-off days when you often saw the sun rise, days when life was as fresh as those hills which now rise, dew-washed and clean, beyond your car window, so high that to see the tops of them you have to crane your neck. If you are a boy, the mystery of what lies beyond those hills is heavy upon you. You think of other valleys and higher ranges, and your soul expands. Then suddenly the train swings round a bend. Perhaps you see your own locomotive, always a thrilling sight no matter what your age; and, at any rate, the car window encases for a moment the vista down the track instead of the habitual side view. Day is coming on rapidly. It flushes that hill into which the track seems to vanish like the Pied Piper, and shows you the green cleft under high ledges



The window framed a dark, spruce-clad mountain wearing a pink hood
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where the mountain river has bitten its way through.

A moment, and you are in that cleft, under the shadow of the cliffs which make almost a second night as they tower over your window with their dark evergreens clinging to every ledge and cranny. A few miles more, and you are through the cleft in the mountains, into a second dawn, and are rolling along above a new and wider valley. You are on your way to the plains. You have the sensation of bursting through the mountain range. The window flashes a procession of great tree-trunks close at hand, and through these trunks you glimpse far below you the wide green intervale, misty with the low morning sun, a picture of dazzling distances new-washed with the dawn.

As the track drops down to the lower levels, stretches of forest alternate with ample green glades where the eye now enjoys the restful sense of flatness, and the occasional houses as they come into the picture and melt out again seem more substantial, wider of beam. The river, too, has taken on a less rapid pace, settling into

stretches under the elms where it flows black and quiet through pasture-lands, and cows, lifting their placid faces, gaze at you as you pass, like a painting of Troyon set into the frame, savored for the instant, and as quickly removed.

But the real lowlands are not yet. Again the train rumbles into the shadow of a rocky cut, emerging into a still flatter country, still more pastoral and cultivated, where the houses are more frequent and the traces of man over the landscape more apparent. You see teams crawling on white roads. At a crossing the face of the gateman looms suddenly into the very foreground of your picture. He is waving his yellow flag. Behind him a horse dances on its hind legs, reined in by its driver. The faces of this driver and of the gateman are flashed upon the retina of your eye and persist in memory after they are put miles behind. Long afterward, you feel sure, you would know these men if you should meet them on a crowded street. As the sun climbs to the meridian and then begins to decline, your landscapes still flow past with ever-shifting charms. A shadowed cross-road runs away into

the woods, calling you to follow it, calling with a voice that is almost instantly lost in the roar of the car-wheels and the forgetfulness of new sights. The world seems settling down into true lowland at last. The water-pools by the track are quite still now, holding the quiet reflections of the swamp maples or the light of the afternoon sun. You roll out of the swamp into broad meadows, where stately and graceful willows grow beside creeping waters and there is a suggestion of tide marshes in the distance. That suggestion of the sea is curiously exciting. It wakes the senses, grown sluggish, perhaps, with the fatigue of travel or dulled by the blur of nature's moving pictures. Alert, you watch for the first glimpse of the blue ocean, as the train rushes on.

Perhaps you never quite see the ocean itself, but only a wide marsh of waving grasses, ribboned by a quicksilver band of tide water, with the far-off bulwark of the dunes thrown up for an horizon line, and over all the great spaces of the sky where the free clouds race. Is not the suggestion of the sea hidden behind a level line

of barren land, more potent than the sight of the sea itself to wake the imagination, to hint of mystery and wonder? Perhaps for the little boy, however, nothing can quite supply that first glimpse of the blue plain, where white sails flash and a steamer on the sky-line makes a trail of smoke. That glimpse he may have from his car window before the sun sets and the train once more turns inland on its way to the city.

Now the roads which cross the track and wind over the cultivated hillsides are gray crushed stone. There is no longer any wildness. The farms suggest market gardening, the river is broader, deeper, as for commerce. Suddenly, alone on a pasture knoll, looms a signboard. It flashes into the view like a bomb explosion. It proclaims a sensational theatrical performance. It shrieks of cities, sophistication. It is followed, in the rapidly gathering twilight, by that peculiar squalor of houses and land which is so characteristic of the approaches to a great town. Perhaps the hills close in for a space, to make a gateway for the town. They seem to bring night with them.

Through the gate of the hills the train rumbles, and emerges into the sudden glare of lamps, the rush and roar of factories, machine-shops, complicated and buzzing industry. Against the paling west black chimney-stacks huddle like a forest of charred and naked trunks, belching toadstools of smoke upon the sky. Then tall buildings, their outlines pricked with golden lights, come into the picture. You look down brilliantly illuminated cross streets where street-cars crawl, motors and wagons pass and repass, hundreds of busy people throng the walks or pour in and out of the shops and houses. The train slows up. In the great terminal yard is a bewildering tangle of moving trains. Your own car suddenly passes out of the world of moving pictures into the train shed, comes to a stop, and you alight at last at your journey's end, in the heart of a city by the sea. Back there in the mountains where you woke in the morning the patient stars are hanging deeply over the fir-clad slopes and the silent valleys. Here you see no stars, only blazing lamps without end, making a second daylight in the noisy streets. Your pendulum has swung the full length of its

arc. And, unless you are a stranger to this city, unless your ride from the station through its squares and arteries is a fresh spur to your curiosity, are you not a little sorry that the railroad trip is done? Are you so old that the inconveniences of travel outweigh its stimulation?

After all, curiosity is much like the love of freedom; it is the possession of the passion which counts rather than the fulfilment. Ibsen was right in valuing freedom not at all, but in valuing the love of it and the struggle for it above everything else. So the satisfaction of curiosity is a curse if it leads to no wider curiosity. In a very real sense, mankind is the poorer for every new sea that is charted, every new continent mapped, every new reduction of the universe to immutable law. In its constant spur to curiosity and its persistent refusal of gratification, lies one of the great charms of a railroad journey. For the boy it stimulates imagination like almost nothing else. For the man it invites to those pleasant speculations which still maintain, in the midst of humdrum life, a little of the primitive mysteries.

It may be the train stops at a junction, and on the cross track stands another train bearing the name of a different road. Possibly it is a smaller train, with old-fashioned cars. It runs up that single track into the wooded country, toward towns which suggest by their very names an older and quieter order. One is almost irresistibly tempted to climb aboard the old-fashioned cars, to chat with the genial conductor who is bowing to all his passengers as they leave the main line for his branch, and to ride up into that different world. There are such little branch lines not twenty miles from New York. There is such a one leaving the Fitchburg at Hoosac Tunnel and following the Deerfield River up its wild gorges into Vermont. There is such a one in Rhode Island, where the limiteds thunder through Wood River Junction, and only the locals stop, to let you speculate pleasantly on the rural allurements reached by the Hope Valley Railroad. Who knows what Hope Valley is like? Not I, certainly; nor do I wish to, lest it be something less delectable than its name. But the sight of that little antiquated train of one car and a toy

locomotive puffing on the siding, waiting for the occasional passenger for Hope Valley, has given me many a delightful moment. Hope Valley! It is a symbol of our promised land!

How pleasant a view there is, too, at Princeton Junction, where again the limiteds thunder through, or pant to rest for a brief instant while young men with pipes and suit-cases alight. Behind the station stands the little train awaiting them. Its track stretches away over the level plain at right angles, to the distant hill where the college towers rise above the trees. If you, too, leave the limited, with its roar and rumble, your nostrils are filled with the fragrance of country air even as you alight. The little train moves slowly and quietly through the fields, and brings you presently under the shadow of that exquisite, scholastic Gothic entrance-gate, into the peace and well-bred seclusion of an old university. Yet you need not alight from the limited to secure this sensation. Hurrying through to Philadelphia or Washington on your urgent business, for it may be you are what we call "a man of affairs," you glimpse the little train on its branch

line, the level fields, the distant towers, and there comes over you the thought of the quiet scholastic existence, of youthful days spent in ideal pursuits, of lives passed in the grave quest of learning or the grave instruction of others. Then you thunder on between the signboards of commerce, bent upon your own quest of dollars. But does not the picture persist, and its attendant mood? Does not your curiosity awake to speculate on other modes of life than yours? Is Princeton merely a memory for you of a place where you once came to see a football game?

The allurements of the country highway running on beside the track or crossing it at right angles and laying its white ribbon into the distance is one of the most potent charms of car-window pictures. It may be the train, winding along a river, pauses at a town. Here the highway is glimpsed as Main Street; it is lined with stores; teams, or, in winter, "pungs," stand by the curb. There is the bustle of communal life at the station. Friends are greeting the arrivals; men and women smilingly give over their luggage to eager hands. You, at your window, feel curi-

ously lonely, neglected. Out of the village, Main Street becomes the country highway once more. It follows the track a little way, then suddenly turns to the river, crosses that on an old, wooden, covered bridge, still gay with the posters of last summer's circus, and vanishes on the other side into the rolling country. For an instant the vista through the old bridge is flashed into your window-frame, like the view through a telescope. You almost smell its curious odor and hear the echo of your horses' hoofs. Then you are past. You see the road winding up a hill on the farther bank, into the timber or the upland clearings. You know that over those pleasant hills lie the farms where the men and women live who greeted their friends at the station. That highway is the link between the railroad and a community of your fellow creatures. What little epitome of life does that community not hold, set on its gracious hillsides, ribboned by the dusty road? You speculate, you crane your neck for a last view of the highway, faint and far-off now across the river behind; and then the train swings round a bend, the woods come down to the river banks, and you

wait for the next highway to take your fancy into the world of men.

There is something a little pitiful about the person who must always have "something to read on the train." The child wants nothing to read on the train, for a story book with pictures on every page is constantly being unrolled for him beyond the car windows. Or, perhaps, as Hans Andersen wrote a *Bilder-buch ohne Bilder*, nature paints for the child in the train a story-book without stories. Nature presents the pictures in lavish profusion and lets the child's imagination build the shifting, kaleidoscopic tale. Yet how infinitely less material the child possesses to build with than you or I, sitting in the opposite seat, absorbed in a book! We have the accumulated experience of years; he has scarcely more than the experience of his own front yard, perhaps, and the village street. Yet he has something far more precious than experience, which we have lost. He has imagination, wonder, curiosity. There are no simple primroses in his world. That is why his face is glued to the car window-pane. Our primroses are all simple

primroses. That is why our faces are fixed upon a book. Who has the better of it, the child or the man? To this you answer, "That depends upon the book." To this I can only reply by inviting your attention to the titles of the books sold upon trains.



V

BIRD ENVIRONMENTS



GREAT deal of gush is written about birds. Just why these honest, clean, musical little monogamists should peculiarly inspire the sentimental, the present writer has never been able to determine. But they do, and a special literary quality and emotional poignancy is supposed to reside in such a sentence as, "I saw three robins, two white-throated sparrows, a red-winged black-bird, and a meadow-lark to-day. Ah, how sweet is Nature and how good is God!" Personally, we fail to find this sort of thing any more thrilling or "literary" than the telephone directory. But for the writer (other than the

technical ornithologist, who, of course, is entitled to the respect due any *bona fide* scientist) who can catch in words the peculiar quality of a bird's song, the hermit's, say, or oven-bird's, who can relate the bird to his environment and make us feel him as an added charm to the particular woods or fields he inhabits, we yield homage. How Thoreau, in a magic sentence, communicates the charm of an old road out of Concord, by the happy mention of a wild flower and a wayside bird, dropping the one golden epithet where it does the work!

Alas! it is not given most of us to write like Thoreau; indeed, few of us would dare to *live* like Thoreau. But many more of us than do could find an added charm in nature by a more delicate observation of wild flowers in relation to the landscape rather than a vase in our parlor, and a more delicate observation of birds in relation to their environment of woods and fields and marshes. The charm of the hermit thrush's song, for instance, resides only in part in its pure musical quality. It resides also in the subtle blending of that quality with the peculiar hush and cool mystery of the deep woods, with the

sombre whisper of the evergreens, with the pure, brooding colors of twilight in the west.

So there are birds of the orchard and garden, birds of the fields and meadows, birds of the marshes, and birds of the woods, each with a peculiar character of song to trained ears, and each, when known, thereafter associated with a special landscape, so that one comes to feel them as a part of this landscape, and looks no more for raspberries in an upland pasture by the woods than for white-throated sparrows, or for apple blossoms in an old orchard in May than for the warblers or peewees twinkling in the leaves.

The fat robin hopping down a garden path or dabbling for worms on the lawn is a familiar friend. There is something, too, about his song which touches a homely domestic chord in our hearts. He is apostrophized from a window by Sill, in his famous poem beginning:

“Singing in the rain, robin?”

His song came up from the orchard to MacDowell plaintively, related to human things, and the composer wrote his lied, “The robin sings in

the 'apple-tree.' The robin's song has no wildness in it to our ears, but brings to memory a village street and children playing, the scent of apple blossoms, or fresh mornings when we awoke and lay drowsily in bed while the fragrance of lilac came through the open window, and mingled with the domestic music of the house — the rattle of dishes, the rumble of voices in the room below — was borne in the cheery warble of the redbreasts. No less than the bursting pink of orchards is the robin a part of returning spring about our dwellings, familiar, near.

Like him, too, are the blue-birds and the wrens, with their suggestion of human habitations near by; and humming-birds to recall trumpet-vines or old-fashioned gardens. The brilliant orange oriole, with his strident, commanding call, flashes through the orchard trees or swings his nest from a drooping elm limb even over the village street. You see the flame-red of the scarlet tanager against the green of fir-trees in the deep woods, but the oriole abides near by, and his peculiar flash of orange belongs to the color scheme of streets and orchards.

When the orchard has laid aside its pink for green, and then its green for the gray of bare trunks and limbs, certain friendly birds still linger, and all winter through add life and sound to the desolation of our gardens. The chickadees, fat little fellows in flocks, peck for insects on an old thorn-apple like a new crop of fuzzy fruit, and their song is as cheerful as sleigh-bells. Nuthatches and woodpeckers go up and down the trunks, tapping a tune. You may see chickadees out in the woods, busy about their affairs, but their song seems never quite right, in winter, unless there is a dwelling in sight. They and their winter companions seem to draw near to man in the desolate seasons, for mutual comfort. Hence the song of the chickadee is perhaps the friendliest sound in nature.

From the orchard, too, on an autumn midnight, comes the mournful whistle of a screech-owl. Most of us who have heard the screech-owl at all have heard its call drifting down from an old orchard on a frosty October night. The chill of coming winter, the cattle stamping in dark stables, a dim and ghostly world stretching over

garnered fields to the mystery of the woods, and a gnarled, ancient orchard up the slope seen phantomlike under a waning moon — these are the setting for the screech-owl's mournful whistle. I can at this moment shut my eyes, reproduce that whistle in my throat, and bring back to memory, as if it were yesterday, the scene as my boyhood eyes saw it from my chamber window, whence I peeped with frosted breath before diving into bed, and I can actually smell (for all the tobacco smoke in my present study) the peculiar odor of the cold October night air, and feel again a vague, almost terrifying melancholy chill in my heart as, in the darkness, I heard from the orchard that reiterated whoo-oo-oo-oo. Like the whip-poor-will on the pasture rail on a hot evening of July, this other night-singer of New England seems to 'dwell just on the skirts of human habitations and to keep our souls reminded of some lurking sadness in the world.

From the orchard to the river banks and marshes is but a step in my Berkshire home, yet the bird life is quite different. Only the yellow warblers and the king-birds seem to find, in early

spring (and the king-birds the summer through), the apple-trees and the willows of equal attractiveness. Up in the garden and orchard it is the blue-birds who herald the returning season, then those migrating transients, the fox sparrows, then the robins. Down on the river reaches it is the red-winged blackbirds. A broad stretch of meadow and marsh, a silver thread of water winding through, now but just freed of drifting ice, the hills beyond, and a sky soft and warm at last with spring — and suddenly of a morning the blackbirds are here, chattering in rushes and willows, tossing their dark bodies against the blue, and showing in a flash of sun the red upon their wings. They belong no less to these broad, free river reaches than the tamer robins to the garden paths, and the picture is no nearer complete without them.

Along the river, too, dwell other birds that give it a peculiar quality of its own, even from the merely pictorial side. The great blue heron is a familiar resident of our streams. You never see him in the orchard or the wood. But as you slip noiselessly down the current in a canoe you may

round a bend where the willows dip the stream or the white birches gaze at their white reflections, and come upon him wading on a sand-bar, his long neck alternately shortening and lengthening as he preens his feathers or darts his great bill for fish, his beautiful blue plumage over the rippling water, and his graceful form, making a picture as Japanese as anything in Japan. One of the caddies at our golf club caught an injured heron last summer, and carried it home in his arms, in imminent danger of having his eyes pecked out, and deposited it in the chicken yard — the strangest contrast you ever saw! But the heron recovered in the night, and in the morning he had disappeared, gone back, no doubt, to his Japanese screen.

Along the river, too, the crested kingfisher, with his white breast, is prominent on a tawny willow spray, the swallows scoop, and the bitterns. Over a harbor, how much of the charm resides in the exquisite grace of the swooping gulls. No less over our inland waterways and marshes, a peculiar charm resides in the sight and sound of the special bird life. Creep up a tiny

creek in a canoe, and hear the protesting mew of a cat-bird in the alders. You may hear him on the edge of the woods, or even in your own garden, but there the sound has no particular flavor, certainly no pleasant one. But startle him in his native alders, and how sweet the harsh sound suddenly becomes, the very essence of the quiet, sun-flecked thicket and dappled stream, and his exquisite, gun-metal body amid the gray twigs might be the fairy of the swamp.

As we pass toward the deep woods we go through a regular succession of bird life, and it is curious how often the transition from the humbler songs of the meadow birds and the tweetings of the inhabitants of upland fields and berry pastures to the final glories of the thrushes' music is made by the white-throated sparrow at the edge of the forest, that sweet little songster who flutes his perfectly enunciated triplets with the technical perfection of the thrush but without the thrush's woodland quality.

In our mountain country bobolinks and larks and song-sparrows are melodious in the meadows, so constantly melodious at times that we

scarce hear their song, any more than the cricket's chime or the ticking of a familiar clock. As we climb higher into the pastures and berry patches, the world grows more quiet, and we pause to watch a chewink perched on a twig against the background of field and mountain, his throat a-tremble with his song. Here the sparrows of all sorts are more readily heard, also, and here most often is to be seen the brilliant plumage of the indigo-bird. And on the edge of the timber the white-throated sparrow, or Peabody, most freely and frequently plays his reedy pipe. The sun is warm in the upland pastures, and bird notes are warm, too, intimate, close to the ground.

Then we enter the cathedral dimness of the woods. How still it suddenly becomes! How mysterious! How alluring! We are in a different world, and as our silent footsteps carry us deeper the hush steals over our very spirits. Then on the stillness suddenly rings out the indescribable fairy clarion of the hermit-thrush, the most beautiful sound in nature, the soul of the woods made audible. Seldom enough will you see



Then on the stillness suddenly rings out the indescribable fairy clarion
of the hermit-thrush, the most beautiful sound in nature, the soul
of the woods made audible

a thrush against the solemn tree trunks with stabs of sky between. He seems rather a disembodied voice than a bird. But especially at twilight, at the still-time of the world when the solemn glow of sunset illumines the west, his song is the distilled essence of loveliness and the great peace and mystery of nature. "Cool bars of melody from the atmosphere of everlasting morning or evening," said Thoreau of his song, and though Thoreau was never able to distinguish between the wood-thrush and the hermit, it is true of either that in its notes "there is the liquid coolness of things that are just drawn from the bottom of springs."

How much of this quality in the thrush's song is due to the actual physical effect of his environment, or how much is due to our human association of ideas, we do not propose to hazard a guess. Mr. Stone, the artist for this book, would have it that all birds have drawn a quality in their songs from their physical needs and adaptabilities. Certainly the thrushes, vireos, and warblers of the woods have a woodland quality, apart from human association of ideas; but can as

much be said for that other forest dweller, the oven-bird, with its *teach-ér, teach-ér, teach-ér?* And why should the poor grackle emit his abortive squeak, as if he needed oiling, above green meadows where the lark pours out his rapture? The question — if there be a question — is one for the more scientific to settle. We are content, for ourselves, to let the mere association of ideas give to each bird song its peculiar charm and fitness. The power to associate ideas is what makes man a reasoning animal, then an imaginative and creative one. The association of ideas makes poetry, and without its power to evoke such associations in us, even Keats's "Ode to the Nightingale" would be but prosy stuff.

How much, then, of the charm of a chickadee's song or a thrush's, of the sight of a nuthatch upside down on a gray apple-tree trunk or a blue heron wading in rippled water, resides in the memories it challenges, the associations it arouses! The chickadee in winter, cheerful little voice, sings of sleigh-bells and a white world, of red window squares seen through the cedars, of wood smoke and pink cheeks. The thrush stirs

us by his vocal perfection, but stirs us, too, because his voice is associated with forest mystery and twilight peace, and though heard occasionally at noonday on a village street (we had a wood-thrush in our yard last summer) invariably brings the listener up sharp and sets his thoughts a-dream. Always there is something pictorial, Japanese, about the heron. He was born a wader, and to see him is to think water at the base of a decorative design.

To watch the birds in relation to their environment, then, to listen for their peculiar songs in place and season, is to add new charm to each feathered warbler, because it is to add new associations in your mind; and it is to add, as well, new charm to each peculiar phase of the landscape — marsh or swamp or berry patch or wood — because to each belongs its special bird life, and the white kingfisher on the tawny willow spray above the river is as much the crowning touch to the intimate river view as is the song of the robin the crowning touch to the peace of your old garden under its apple blossoms in the warm spring rain.



VI

THE HARBOR



SINCE man first went down to the sea in ships, harbors have been his care, his protection, his delight. Where lonely sea meets barren shore, where the land pushes out a lean finger into the blue or buffets the breakers with a granite fist, the eye may rejoice and the spirit grow lyrical. But it is the sheltered harbor, where the great ships come in to lay their sea-borne burdens at the city's feet, which is the real portal to the ocean road; and at that portal man finds most delight of the deep, because he seems there at once its master and under the spell of its mystery. He sees his patient tugs at work,

his long docks laden with freight, his city coming down expectant to the water's edge; and he sees, too, the battered tramps steaming up from under the world rim, the liners going out on their far voyaging. He scents together the odor of the town and the racy salt of the sea. He is aware alike of familiar things and strange. We cease soon enough to greet with fresh wonder the sight of a city, and the unlimited ocean may grow for many of us monotonous or sad. But the harbor is a perpetual wonder and daily a new delight.

There are many harbors intrinsically more beautiful than that of New York, but few more interesting and none more busy. The elderly Southern visitor from Shreveport, La., who refused to utter any expressions of astonishment at the Subway crowds, the East River bridges, the electric illuminations on the Rialto, the multitudinous sky-scrapers, but who stood upon the Battery sea-wall for a time watching the harbor, and then exclaimed with deep feeling, "This sure is the Shrevepo't o' the No'th, sah!" aptly expressed the commercial importance of New York Harbor. But he did not express its peculiar

acquired beauty; he could not, for he did not know it well enough. You cannot learn to know New York Harbor from the sea-wall of the Battery. You must view it at all times, from all points and angles, before its multitudinous and ever-changing delights grow into an impression of beauty so strong and so memorable that it can never fade, so strong, indeed, that you will love this smudgy bay almost above all others, finding them tame, or even colorless, by comparison.

New York Harbor is divided by The Narrows, that channel passage between Staten Island and Brooklyn, into two bays, the Upper and the Lower, much like a huge dumb-bell, save that the Lower Bay is the larger, extending south from Quarantine to Sandy Hook, west to Raritan Bay, and merging eastward with the open Atlantic. The great volume of the Hudson, pouring past Manhattan Island, through the Upper Bay and The Narrows deposits its load of soil in this Lower Bay, where red buoys mark the difficult channel and the larger liners sometimes go aground in the fog. It is seventeen miles as the crow flies from the New York City Hall to

Sandy Hook Light. It is only six miles to St. George, Staten Island, which marks the head of The Narrows. The Upper Bay, or harbor proper, is thus far removed from the open sea. It is almost a lake, some five miles on either diameter, made by the confluence of the Hudson and East rivers. Within its area, and in the rivers on either side of that long, narrow strip of dividing rock called Manhattan Island, half the water commerce of a continent is conducted; and over it on ferry-boats and bridges or under it in steel and concrete tubes daily pass so many thousands of people that the head is dizzy reckoning their number. At the head of it rises that Andean range of sky-scrapers on the southern nose of Manhattan, man's mightiest material accomplishment since the Pyramids. Over it drifts the smoke from a myriad chimneys on the shore, a myriad funnels on the water. Yet the sea fog works up through The Narrows with the smell of brine; a coast schooner beats in under dirty canvas, with a broken wing, perhaps, from some wild gale off Hatteras; the brilliant sun flashes from a gull's breast and the steel-gray, dancing waves —

and the call of the deep comes over you. Your eye and your heart follow that steamer dropping down channel with the tide. You feel, as the wash of the liner gently jiggles your ferry-boat, the heave and swing of the long Atlantic rollers. The harbor asks its toll of dreams from those who cross upon it. As little Will-o'-the-mill stood upon his hilltop and looked down into the plain to the far city, his eyes big with wistfulness, so you may see the army of those who "commute," leaving their day's toil in town, stand on the deck of the ferry-boats at night and look through The Narrows down the ocean road, the ancient call of the sea not yet silent in their hearts, that siren call of freedom and adventure.

What gives to New York Harbor its unique aspect, of course, and its dominant note of power, is that Andean pile of sky-scrapers which rises at its head, crowned by the peak of the Singer Tower and flanked by the leaping spans of two great suspension bridgès. To the voyager coming up the bay, after his ship has slipped through The Narrows past the two forts and under the green hills of Staten Island, this mountain range

seems to rise like mortared Sierras out of the sea, hazed with smoke and blue with distance. As he draws nearer and the buildings take separate form, their tiers of windows proclaiming their incredible height, his first impression of New York, of the New World, is that of an architectural miracle, a Babylonian dream. A first impression is seldom a last; but though the wonder of these buildings soon wears off for those who fly up and down in their elevators or dash about in the cañon slits between them, and their beauty is converted to ugliness for some when they cannot be viewed as a group, for him who views them from the harbor or the opposite shores their spell of wonder never grows less, their beauty never vanishes. Viewed as a part of the harbor, as its great head wall, as the crown of the picture, they are sometimes of ethereal lightness, sometimes of Dantean strength and massiveness, but always beautiful.

And their aspect over the harbor is never twice the same, from day to day, from hour to hour, nor the same from any two points of sight. If you take a Thirty-ninth Street, Brooklyn, ferry

from the Battery, passing through Buttermilk Channel where the long docks face across to Governor's Island, you may look back presently and see the green parade-ground like a lawn at the feet of the sky-scrappers; the intervening water is quite concealed. To one side of you is the Erie Basin, filled with the steamers of all nations, like a corral of strange sea-cattle; to the other side the sailing-ships lie at anchor, between you and the main channel. Behind, leaping up apparently out of a green lawn, are the peaks of lower Manhattan, flying their flags and their white steam plumes gayly against the blue. That is when the light is clear and sharp. On such a morning you might have stood upon a dock in Jersey City and seen the sun rise behind the long range of towered buildings, transfiguring them. On such a morning they stand in sharp silhouette against the dawn sky, their separate peaks distinct, their bases a blurred mass. They are painted in the flat. Then the sun comes up. Through the cross streets it shoots level rays. Down amid the caves and cañons these rays pierce, touching cornices and windows with gold and bringing out as if by

magic the third dimension of the picture. Up against the new-washed sky the smoke plumes grow rosy. Tall building casts shadows upon tall building, mutually supplying the solidity which the isolated steel-frame structure with its mere shell of stone cannot suggest; and as the sun itself at last appears above them the whole river seems suddenly to wake to life, and to pour its commerce round the city's feet.

It is seldom, however, save at early morning or on a Sunday, that the atmosphere about these mortared mountains is free from smoke or haze. When once the city and the harbor have awaked, an aerial gauze is spread upon the lower island and the high buildings but loom the larger through it, with deeper shadows or softer outlines or lovelier colors. There are steel-gray days, when the sun is overcast and a wind is up; and the white-caps on the harbor, the steam plumes from the buildings, the foam-fleck in the wake of tugs and ferry-boats, are spatters of china-white on a monochromatic picture. There are Japanese days, when a thin sea fog is in, though the sun is bright and cheerful. Then the

harbor, the sky, and the city are but three delicately differentiated shades of the same blue, and the great buildings loom remote and ethereal, once more painted in two dimensions. On such a day the gay flags whipping out high aloft and the red stacks of the liners at their piers are gaudy spots of color, and usually some tug trails a gigantic feather of velvety black smoke across the picture. There are days of lowering rain and mist, when the Singer Tower goes out of sight in the clouds and the city, from the harbor, becomes almost unbelievable, while the screeching whistles take on a terrifying tone. There are days, too, of copper sunsets over the low-lying Jersey shore, when, from the water, you see tier after tier of windows on Manhattan turn to molten fire, and from up the darkening river come sudden flashes of copper flame from the windows of the ferry-boats.

With the coming of early night in winter, all the tiers of windows up the cliff walls of the skyscrapers become checks of gold. As darkness deepens and the outlines of the buildings grow more indistinct, the Singer Tower, bathed in the

white glow of its invisible searchlights, seems a strange snow-capped peak lording it over the lesser heights, and the wake of your ferry-boat on the water is a purple lane stretching back to the land of wonder. When the outlines of the buildings have completely disappeared, the innumerable window lights are the street lamps of a city running up a great hill, as if New York were builded on a mountainside, and the white tower, instead of appearing suspended in midair, seems to crown this eminence. Now, looking away from the city, you see the ferry-boats, with their rows of windows each with a light twinkling through it, moving over the water like animated birthday cakes.

By day or night, the humble voyage to Staten Island is a perpetual delight. By day, it may be, a tug goes past in a keen, off-shore wind, towing a brace of inland canal-boats. These barges flaunt an independent life of their own under the very nose of New York. Geraniums bloom by the tiller, the domestic linen is flapping on a line, a face glances up at you from the cabin door with only the mildest interest. What has the slow,

peaceful, nerveless life of canals to do with this great town and panting tug and white-capped, racing bay? The tug, almost as if it were aware of the incongruity, as if it were caught associating with a country cousin, pushes on hastily, warned by the hoarse, rattling, bass bellow of a liner coming down the channel. The liner goes past without a sound save the occasional roar of her whistle, her passengers high above you hanging over the rail and looking back at New York. But in the anchorage west of the channel, from the Statue of Liberty on, the rusty tramp ships point into the tide without life or motion, wearily resting. If the day is foggy, they cut black against the vast gray blank of sky and water, the sooty laborers of the deep, and Liberty looms large and ghostly behind them.

On such a day of fog, too, when the city might be a hundred miles away, it often happens that in half the circumference of the horizon nothing will cut against the pale blue or the gray immensity but a single tug, sending up a gigantic mushroom of smoke which moves along with the boat as if its stem were stuck fast in the funnel, and tones

so softly into the mist that the brush of a Corot might have painted it. In the fog, indeed, there is the constant excitement of sudden, unexpected picture, or sharp meetings with sea fellows. Warned in advance by the bellow of her whistle, you may sometimes greet a monster liner coming up from Quarantine, which she was able to reach before the fog bank caught her to hold her till morning anchored outside the Hook. A pigmy tug runs on ahead, like a little dog, and even when her towering prow and lofty stacks are visible, her stern is lost in the mystery. When all the fabulous length of her has slipped past, her decks crowded with men and women peering cityward, and when the deafening vibration of her whistle has grown fainter, you hear on your own star-board bow the mournful fog-bell off St. George, and see emerge through the mist the humble wharves of Staten Island.

Across the Kill von Kull, at Bayonne, is a smelter chimney several hundred feet tall, which pours out a perpetual stream of pale, yellowish smoke. When the wind is west, this smoke drifts directly over Staten Island. One afternoon, as

the ferry-boat approached the slip, I saw the sun piercing down through this haze, carrying the shadow of St. George Hill darkly over the water to the east as far as the government anchorage, and there striking full upon a gray battleship and her collier. It was ridiculously as if a spotlight in the second balcony of a smoky theatre were directed upon the star performer on the stage; yet it was all on so vast a scale that you bowed in admiration. The grim iron hulk of the fighter seemed almost self-consciously aware of the dramatic effect. There is something a bit theatric about an ironclad always. This one was, for the space of several minutes, the centre of every gaze on the ferry-boat. Here for once, at least, the implication of sex we have placed upon ships seemed amply justified!

Just below Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island is South Beach, and there on a clear day you may look across the yellow sand and the strip of bright blue water in The Narrows to the green shore of Brooklyn, while to your right, beyond the two piles of red brick buildings on the Quarantine islands, the Lower Bay stretches out to open sea.



A pigmy tug runs on ahead, like a little dog, and even when her towering
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New York is invisible somewhere back to the left, and this narrow strip of vivid blue is the ocean road leading from her gates. As you sit in the warm sand, watching the white yawls skim back and forth or a three-master beat in against wind and tide, you suddenly see a red prow push out from behind the rampart of Fort Wadsworth. Silently, without smoke or churn, as if she were drawn along by an invisible wire, the steamer passes you close by, swings toward the Ambrose Channel, and heads for the open sea. Then another comes, and another. Red stacks or yellow or black, German or British or French flags (and only too infrequently the Stars and Stripes), proclaim the ships of this transatlantic line or that. Some of the smaller vessels are coasters or deep-sea tramps. That great black hulk with four red stacks, which hides half the Brooklyn shore, is the *Mauretania*. The day's exit has begun. The first ship is already a speck on the horizon. Behind her, down the Lower Bay, follows the procession. To see these great ships coming through The Narrows, one after the other, from the invisible city and standing out to all the ports of

the world is to hold a vision of the commercial importance of the town and the harbor more overwhelming, perhaps, than any which a nearer view affords or which any statistics can supply. And you, it may be, are sitting the while in a bathing-suit on the warm sand, basking like a savage in the sun and the clean salt air!

There are certain pleasures permitted to those we pharisaically call "the lower classes" which atone in no small measure for the lack of wealth or a place in the social register. One of these is the pleasure of eating fruit or cookies or buns in public places, if you chance to be hungry. Another is the pleasure of going down the harbor by boat to Coney Island on a hot summer night. The boat, an old-fashioned side-wheeler, drops down the Hudson from Harlem, making her last stop at Pier One, at the Battery, where a sweltering mob waits to crowd upon her already crowded decks. You must push and scramble in the approved New York fashion if you would secure a place near the rail, and your nose will be assaulted by the smell of stale "refreshments" and your ears by the inharmonious strains of a band of

musicians, sawing out a popular tune. But after the walking-beam is once more in motion and the evening breeze over the water carries the sound and odor astern, the harbor is spread for your delight.

Perhaps a last hot orange flare of sunset remains in the sky over the low Jersey shore, but night has dusked the Brooklyn bank. Behind you the Singer Tower raises its shaft of pale light, and the trains crawl like glow-worms over the high-flung web of Brooklyn Bridge. As the boat passes down well to the east of the channel, the fiery flare from a blast-furnace reddens the horizon, and against it two stand-pipes on iron stilts are suddenly thrown into silhouette out of the night, like huge daddy-long-legs striding along the top of the docks. You go past a derrick lighter, too, like a huge inanimate spider on its back towed by a water-bug, and slip almost in among the fleet of sailing-ships anchored off Gowanus Bay. How silently, mysteriously, they ride at anchor in the night, their bare spars and faint web of rigging black against the sky, their red and green lights alone giving sign of life!

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Perhaps another comes to join them even as you pass, her ghostly sails booming suddenly at you out of the dark, or sliding down with a rattle of tackle and the hoarse shouts of the crew.

Through The Narrows the lines of twinkling lamps on either shore run on as far as the dark, ominous battlements of the forts, and then the Lower Bay widens ahead, the great beacon of Sandy Hook Light flashes at regular intervals seemingly out of the limitless water, and the wind freshens, grows more salt, brings to stifled nostrils a breath of brine. A short while, and the excursion boat rounds the end of Sea Gate and rolls on the dying ground swell from the open Atlantic.

And there, directly before you, though for some time you have detected its highest tower over the land, Coney Island pricks its incandescent battlements upon the night and turns to troubled gold the moving waters at its feet. A tinsel, tawdry thing by day, a delirium of shabby make-believe, by night it is a dream mirage rising out of the ocean, a towered city builded all of

golden lamps, with splashes here and there of red or green; and the sound of it, coming over the surf as the steamer moves in to the pier, is the vast, happy roar of a carnival.

The Coney Island boat on its return is no less heavily laden, but the crowds are sleepy now and the atrocious band is silent. In the shadows of the stacks, or unashamedly on the open decks, girls lay their heads upon their lovers' shoulders, or, more often, it must be confessed, 't is the masculine head which is pillowed. The children sprawl in slumber, their grimy hands clutching a wooden spade or a half-eaten pop-corn ball. A last look eastward before the boat enters The Narrows shows the Dreamland tower at Coney still illuminated, but the window squares on the Brooklyn bank and the hills of Staten Island are dark now. The shore is sleeping, too. Entering the Upper Bay, you know how late the hour is, because the Singer Tower is invisible. The searchlights which play upon it have been extinguished. Only a faint rosy haze of light, reflected up on the sky from the street-lamps, proclaims the city. Midnight has struck. The boat

churns on past the sleeping fleet of sailing-vessels to the right, the long line of deep-sea tramps anchored under the torch of Liberty to the left. There is no sign of life on any of them. A ferry-boat goes past, her decks almost deserted. Around the nose of the Battery a tug is creeping with a string of black barges in tow; the harbor night shift are toiling in the dark. Through the trees on Battery Park winds the glow-worm of an L-train. Above the Battery loom the monstrous, indistinct cliff walls of the sky-scrapers, and a slit of night sky between them proclaims the existence of Broadway. As the sleepy crowds on the boat clamber down the gang-plank, this dim, gargantuan pile of brick and mortar seems to swallow them up. They become dehumanized. They vanish into the dark pier-shed like black corn into a hopper. They are converted into mere atoms of the city's swarming life.

The wheels churn again, the boat moves up the river under the stars, past the endless mountain-range of town outlined on the night sky. The smoke of day has cleared from the harbor now. The everlasting toot of whistles is almost stilled,

save when a belated ferry-boat draws out of her slip or a tug labors past with a barge of freight-cars. The black water tosses cool and mysteriously deep, and when a puff of breeze comes over it from the city the sudden smell of street dust is revolting. There, where the long liners sleep beside their iron piers, nosing their prows close up to the first lamps on the shore which twinkle away in endless perspective down the cross streets, is the end of the ocean road. Behind lies the harbor; in front lies the inland river; and between the pleasant country whence the river comes and the wind-swept waters whither the great ships go sits the city, monstrous, stifling, strong and metallic, and asks its toll of countryside and sea. It asks its toll of us as well, on such a night as this, when we too finally leave the excursion boat and are swallowed up within its walls — its toll of sadness and unsatisfied desire. Northward, under the Palisades, the glimmering Hudson melts into the dark. Southward, washing the base of the mortared mountains, the harbor opens like a gateway of escape. A final glance from the pier before we turn into the choking

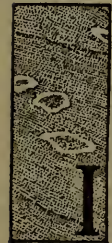
streets, a final breath of its salt odor — and then the closing of the prison gates!

But, after all, the harbor has borne us for a time on its bosom into another world, and whispered, if all too briefly, of the strangeness of the sea. Even as it brings the commerce to our gates, it lifts our spirits beyond the clutch of commerce. It ministers at once to utility and to beauty. This the harbor will ever do so long as man goes down to the sea in ships.



VII

WILD LIFE IN NEW YORK .



I AM not a naturalist. I tell myself I have never had time to become a naturalist, though perhaps the truth is I have never had the patience. I do not consider a man or woman a naturalist who goes hopping about the woods and fields around a summer resort, armed with a "Baby Pathfinder to the Birds," and on sighting a feathered songster on a bough consults the book and exclaims, "Oh, see the Wilson—or is it a hermit?" Personally, I should prefer not to know the birds at all rather than to know them through a Baedeker. What little I do know of birds and wild things I learned as a country boy, as I

learned to whittle a stick, to skate, to set traps, to find my way home through the woods at night. I like to fancy that I love them thus, not as the pseudo-naturalist, but as one who hears in their call the call of an earlier, untroubled morning, the whisper of half-forgotten things. In this great, crowded, treeless city of New York, swarming with its four millions of human prisoners, the hints of the wilderness which I seek or stumble upon are at once a pleasure and a pain; they speak to me of a life far different from this we live on Manhattan Island and call "civilization"; and to be reminded of that other life is both to dream happy dreams and to feel the pangs of restlessness and discontent. I do not need to wait for the smell of April grass in Central Park to give me woodland fever. Did not a hermit thrush spend yesterday in the ailantus tree in a certain back yard near Washington Square?

He was, I suppose, on his way north to Franconia, there to fill the June twilights with melody on the fir-clad slopes of Lafayette or Cannon. I wondered why he did not go up through the Jersey hills and strike across the Hudson farther

north. Perhaps he pined, as some hermits have done before him, for just one fling at the gay metropolis! At any rate, there he was, in his plain country suit, sitting very quiet all day. He did not sing. I prayed at twilight that he would, but his voice was silent. He was still sitting there when night came on, but with morning he had gone.

This back yard, which is in an old residence section of town near Washington Square, now rapidly giving way to sweat-shops and commerce, is no larger than a pocket-handkerchief. The ailantus tree is half — or two-thirds — dead. So are the spindly trees in the other back yards up and down the block. Two or three doors away an Italian *table d'hôte* restaurant, where they serve spaghetti and red ink for forty-five cents, sets out tables in summer beneath the stars, and you can hear the chatter of voices at night and see the lamps. Yet in all the poor spindly trees along the block during the migration seasons there are visitors from the greener world, even from the wildwoods — friendly chickadees, robins, and myrtle warblers being, perhaps, the most com-

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mon. I have seen chewinks, too; but more often they are in the open spaces of the parks and squares. Sometimes there is a junco. The other day one rode to Staten Island on a ferry-boat. He was on his way somewhere, had stopped off for a bit of sightseeing, and was getting a free ride out of town. And of course I am always looking again for my hermit thrush.

When I was a boy, I had to go out in the yard after my shoes every summer morning, because at exactly five minutes past three a whip-poor-will used to perch on the oak close to my window and call insistently — so insistently that he woke me up, which in those days was something of a feat. He was so close that I could hear the throaty gurgle in his call. Every night I threw my shoes at him. But I never hit him. I am glad now, for I long ago forgave him, and the call of a whip-poor-will to me to-day is irresistibly appealing, fraught with the sweet, sad memories of youth. This call I cannot hear on Broadway, but I have once or twice on a June night, in a rare moment of comparative stillness, heard the querulous note of the night-hawk, first cousin to the

whip-poor-will. The naturalists tell us that the night-hawks nest on top of the Manhattan skyscrapers. Be that as it may, their call sometimes drifts down past Trinity spire — to some ears a sweeter chime.

You have only to cross the rivers on any ferry-boat to see the gulls swooping and sailing, beautiful miniature monoplanes. But did you ever see an eagle in New York, except in a cage or on a gold piece? Or did you ever see a heron, or a screech-owl, or a turkey-buzzard? Did you ever meet a fox, except on business, or a white-tailed deer? Or, at twilight, when his brown fur looks black and the white streak from his chin down between his forelegs tells prominently, did you ever see the sharp muzzle of a mink, wet and shiny, thrust cautiously up over the bank of a stream, and the sharp eyes dart about seeking food — or danger? Probably you have not. Yet all these things have been seen within the boundaries of the largest and most densely populated city on the Western Hemisphere — not in the remote past, but in the crowded present.

The mink, indeed, are the greatest menace to

the wild fowl kept in the Bronx Park. The little Bronx River comes down from historic White Plains, enters Bronx Park at the northern end, near the Botanical Gardens, where it winds along in the swampy leaf-mould at the base of the hemlock grove, for all the world as if it were in the wilderness (save for the paths cut here and there on the bank), goes out of the park at the southern end, over a dam, meets the tide in the village of West Farms, and finally finds its way into Long Island Sound through the great salt marshes that sweep up to the green pasture that was once the Westchester Golf Club course, close to Westchester Avenue and the railway. Those salt marshes, by the way, are dotted with tiny rock islands, plumed with scrub-oak, safe nesting-places for the birds; and in the old days of the golf club a brassey shot in spring ten feet off the fairway took you into veritable beds of violets and anemones. The violets are still there, but there is no more golf.

Both up and down the Bronx River, which is not the cleanest stream in the world, swim the mink. Probably the fishing is n't good; certainly

their favorite trout are not plentiful! But the mink will eat anything, and nice, tender wild fowl, fattened by feeding in the Zoo, are not to be scorned by mink or man. So the mink centre in upon the swampy stretches of the stream bordering the Zoo and the hemlock forest. I dare say a careful investigation of the banks, especially northward into Westchester County, would disclose their abiding-places. But the task is not a fragrant one. At any rate, they come to the Bronx Park by night, and sometimes wipe out whole families of wild fowl before morning. Once one of them killed an entire flock of gulls, six or seven in number, which were sleeping carelessly on a miniature sand-bar jutting into the park lake, after their fashion, heedful only of hunters. But, possibly, to make a meal for a mink is no less ignominious an end than to make a wing for a milliner. The mink's track in the snow is unmistakable, because he digs in his claws so decisively. After a light fall, sifted down through the Bronx hemlocks upon the frozen leaf-mould, you may track him to the stream's edge, and find, perhaps, tell-tale feathers

by the way. But it is doubtful if you will ever see his sleek, cautious muzzle nose up over the bank. He is the fox of the water. He plays the craft of the wilderness in the heart of town. He dares danger because he has such an uncannily clever faculty of dodging it.

Only a year or two ago a red fox was seen in New York City, not once but several times. He was seen by an artist who had a little studio shack on the wooded hillside sloping toward the Harlem River at University Heights near the Hall of Fame. Perhaps the fox wished to ascertain if Poe's name had yet been placed in that gallery! He evidently came down from Van Cortlandt Park, and was observed several times at day-break loping along toward the river. Possibly he was quite safe, for New Yorkers, even when they are out of bed at five in the morning, are not, as a rule, armed for fox-hunting. But why he had wandered thus far into civilization is a mystery.

If you will go up to the Bronx Park Zoo early in the morning, before the sun is up (which you probably won't!), you may see herons walking over the top of the great flying-cage, with some-

thing comically akin to envy in their rustic strut. It is exactly as if the poor wild things envied their cousins in captivity, just as the countryman, in the freedom of his fields, envies his city fellow, cooped up in a flat with a big salary to keep him superficially contented. And once in a while an early riser in the Bronx may see a black speck circling overhead and winding down the aerial spiral till it discloses the wing-spread of an eagle. A white-headed eagle actually spent some time, two seasons ago, in a tree close to the cage of his captive brothers in the Zoo. By what instinct he detected their presence from on high, or from what impulse he descended to their side, I am not naturalist enough to say. Presently he soared away again into the wilderness.

In that beautiful forest of hemlocks (there used to be chestnuts, too, but they have died) which stretches through the Bronx Park, doubly beautiful in winter when the paths are obliterated and the trail of man can be forgotten by a few strides from the roadway, a European fallow deer lived in a wild state for two winters. Originally seventeen escaped from the Zoo. All but

two were caught. But these two were clever, and eluded capture until nature had taken its course. The buck and the fawn were ultimately killed, but the doe continued to live at liberty for at least two winters. A friend of mine once met her almost face to face. To come upon a wild deer in the woods not ten minutes' walk from the Subway is something of an adventure!

But other deer have been met in New York which had not escaped from the Zoo. One of them, indeed, a whitetail or Virginia deer, escaped into it. He was caught swimming the Hudson River, and if a tug had not fished him out of midstream he would have landed, undoubtedly, on Manhattan Island. He must have wandered, it is supposed, from the north Jersey mountains to the edge of the Palisades. There he looked across at that strange spectacle of piled-up buildings, railways on stilts, jewelled lights and plumes of smoke — and started over to investigate! Another whitetail deer was captured in Yonkers, close to the New York line, as he was heading for Van Cortlandt Park. Once in the park, he might well have startled some golfer

going down to the spring for a drink, by crashing away through the swamp.

To me there has always been something quaint and touching about the fishermen of New York — I do not mean the professional fishermen, nor those who go down the bay of a Sunday with more bottles than bait, but the old fellows who sit on the rocks in Washington Park and play, perhaps, that they are boys again, while they pull an occasional catfish out of the Hudson. These catfish used to be delicious, but I am told they now taste of oil, whether from the motor-boats or the refineries down at Bayonne I cannot say. When you get off the Subway and clamber up the hill and down again to the old fort at Washington Park, you put a high bank between you and the town. As you climb still farther down, you put piles of granite boulders and trees between you and every trace of road or path. You may sit behind one of those boulders at the water's edge and look across the great river to the solemn, wooded Palisades while the gulls swoop overhead, and fancy Manhattan Island is as it was when Henry Hudson nosed the *Half Moon* up

the stream. Across on those Palisades, within sight of New York, I saw a rattlesnake only a year ago!

And presently one of the old fishermen will come to the next rock, unpack his tackle and perhaps a camp-stool, fill a pipe, and go soberly, patiently, to work. I don't object to these fishermen in my solitude. Sometimes I rather long for a line myself. The occasional lovers are much more objectionable.

You can get the fishermen without the lovers by going farther from City Hall and the Subway, down on the sand-dunes and marshes round Jamaica Bay. Here, between Brooklyn on the one hand and the summer city of Rockaway along the ocean-front on the other, are miles of winding tide creeks, shallow bays, brown marsh grasses, drifts of white sand. The wild ducks still are found here, though naturally in lesser numbers than farther east on the Long Island coast, and from the tumbledown shanties built on piles at the head of the hundreds of salt-water creeks boats put out on Saturdays and Sundays the year through, loaded with fishermen. It is a desolate

area, lying flat under the dome of heaven, but lovely with green in summer, with brown and gold in autumn, and always with the blue of the sea water and the procession of the clouds. Though across it crawl black trains in the distance, trailing rosy smoke at sunset, it is spacious, untamed, still given over to the sports of the chase. Yet it lies within the boundaries of New York City.

An old gentleman who died only last winter used to describe to me with great gusto his first hunting expedition in New York. His father gave him a gun, and he went from his home in Greenwich Village, near the present Cunard Docks, over to the woods at the head of the Bowery, and shot a quail! The head of the Bowery is now far "down town," miles south of the centre of population. But in those days Greenwich Village was connected with New York proper by stage-coach, and between were country estates. It seems quite inconceivable. Yet I to-day can leave my house near Washington Square after lunch, take a ferry-boat to Staten Island and a Richmond trolley there, walk a mile at the

end of the line, stand in the woods out of sight of houses, and hear the guns crack out on the Fresh Kill marshes. Then I can come leisurely home and have plenty of time to dress for dinner. And I shall not have been outside the boundaries of New York City.

The village of Richmond, Staten Island, still retains something of its old village charm, especially when you look back upon it from the lane leading southwest along Richmond Creek. The old church-spire rises up amid the trees, out of its congregation of white tombstones, and about it cluster the houses. The lane runs along the southern slope of that great glacial moraine which divides the island like a spine. Cornfields border it, and in the fall apples grow temptingly to hand. Presently the moraine to the right comes to an end. So does the lane. The end of the mound is crested with chestnuts, and if you scramble up to them through a tangle of golden-rod and briars, you will find unexpectedly half a dozen neglected gravestones, a century old, clustered there. The red squirrels scamper among them. The salt wind comes in from the sea and

drives the fog overhead. Last year a woodchuck burrowed just down the slope toward the woods. Once, as I climbed up, I saw the brown streak of a rabbit making off on the other side. It seems almost as if this tiny burial-plot were the last relic of settlers passed a hundred years ago, as if the wilderness were wiping out what they had accomplished.

Just below this point, beyond a wall and a hedge of trees, is a cornfield. Last autumn, when I was there one misty Sunday afternoon, it was lovely with golden pumpkins between the shocks, and here and there a pile of purple cabbage-heads. A shed was dimly visible off to the right, through the woods. No house was to be seen. To the left were the marshes, and beyond them more woods. It might have been the clearing of some pioneer. Not a human was in sight, but out on the marshes somewhere a gun was cracking. Once or twice both barrels spoke, which may have meant good hunting or poor shooting. You could almost fancy the settler, at any rate, coming home with his bag of game for supper. And this was New York City!

There are many spots on Staten Island, indeed, which have so far escaped the suburbanization process as to retain something of their country charm, close as they are to City Hall. Near Silver Lake are groves of chestnuts and beeches, with wonderful glades of goldenrod and wild flowers in the season. The birds are plentiful, and here the chickadee lives the year through. It must be confessed that in many of these places you are obliged to overlook (it cannot be forgiven) a litter of lunch-boxes or bottles or papers before you can reach the exact spot where nothing objectionable obtrudes. It must be confessed, also, that, if you face a woodland vista southward, northward, should you turn, would be visible some suburban "villa," or squatter's shanty, or factory chimney. But imagination may be as truly employed in not seeing things which exist as in inventing things out of the void. Face right, and forget the rest! That is my motto when I hunt the wilderness in New York. The practice brings me much comfort.

Nor is the obtruding sign of civilization always unpleasant. I have spoken of the Bronx Creek



Face right, and forget the rest! That is my motto when I hunt the wilderness in New York. The practice brings me much comfort

marshes where they creep up to the old Westchester Golf Club, and of the little rock islands which dot them. Before that golf club was abandoned to make way for tenements which have not yet materialized, I used to pick my way out to one of these islands, from grass hassock to grass hassock, and, if it was in autumn, build a fire against the rocks. Sometimes I would spend hours there, absolutely unmolested. It was a grand place to work. But I fear I seldom worked. There was too much to see and enjoy. To the right, a half-mile away, across the river and the railway, the land rises up and is crested with tenement-houses, like a long wave, as far as you can see. That is the vanguard of town. The marshes stop it abruptly. It hangs there perpetually suspended. In front the marshes, alive with waving, rustling grass and quicksilver pools, stretch level to the blue waters of the Sound. To the left is more marsh, and then a long green arm of land like a finger pushing out to the Sound. The prevalent wind, passing over the dry grass in autumn, gives the marshes the effect of hastening away from the oncoming town, fleeing before the invader.

As my fire used to burn brightly against the rocks and I sat by it watching the marshes flee before the advance of civilization, I think I was closer to a sympathy and kinship with wild things and wild places than at almost any other time. I was undoubtedly closer to the Subway!

The day is soon coming, however, when that wave-crest of tenements will break, flow over the Bronx River and the reclaimed marshes, and on to the very shore of the Sound. The day is soon coming, no doubt, when there will be apartment-houses in the sleepy old village of Richmond, and those forgotten graves on the end of the moraine will be violated to make a cellar hole. The day is certainly coming soon when the grove on the northern nose of Manhattan Island, with its ancient tulip trees, will be cut down, and the last hint of how the island looked to Henry Hudson will have vanished. Fortunately, across the river the Palisades are going to be preserved in their solemn wooded dignity, and the hemlock forest in Bronx Park will long remain to remind us poor city dwellers of the cool green woods.

But from year to year, almost from month to

month now, the spots in New York City grow fewer where I can seek out a glimpse to remind me of the wilderness or meet a winged or four-footed wild fellow to speak me the news. When I am entirely reduced to the captive creatures in the Zoo and to the park preserves, I fear I shall have to desert New York forever. The wilderness in captivity is but a sorry substitute for the real thing, even for my strayed hermit thrush in the dusty, half-dead ailantus tree down in the back yard.



VIII

WASHINGTON SQUARE: A MEDITATION



AS I sit here by my open window looking out over the tree-tops toward the west, the sound of a hurdy-gurdy floats up to me, detaching itself from the ceaseless rumble of traffic. The grinder is playing a waltz, I do not know what waltz — some cheap thing. But there is sadness in it, and there are memories. In college, in those days when one went about with his senses like a harp, ready to be struck musically by every lightest impression, something — a story of Coppée's perhaps, or just the sound itself floating into the Yard — gave the tune from a hurdy-gurdy power to make me drop my book and dream in a vague,

delicious sadness. So now, on this spring afternoon, the sounds float up to me above the rumble of Washington Square, out of the heart of a titanic, hurrying, commercial city, and I drop all work to listen, plagued with the thoughts of other days, with girls' faces revolving past on shoulders that gleam, with the sound and scent of soft breakers on a beach, with all the silly, sweet memories of youth.

And as I listen, the sound in some still way melts in with the warm breath of spring, transfiguring my view over the tree-tops and the ugly roofs into a thing of beauty. I fall to wondering how we who dwell in New York can keep so blind an eye for what magic the town may hold of pleasant vista or strange loveliness flowering in its dusty ways. Not all can dwell, as I do, six stories up above a green oasis; but walks and parks are free, and that white fountain down there in its ring of yellow tulips holds a rainbow for every passer-by. Even now the sun is sinking lower toward the distant heights of Hoboken, and the rainbow must have formed. I shall go out to see. . . .

As I reached the centre of the Square and sat down on a bench just west of the curve of asphalt around the fountain, which is roped off into a skating-rink for the children, the sun did shoot its rays between the fresh young green of the elms into the heart of the fountain spray. Breeze-blown from the south, the white spray danced and swayed, tossing cool drops over the ring of yellow tulips till a strip of curb glistened, and the ragged children ran with shrill cries through the miniature deluge, for all the world like the sparrows which darted through the edge of the fountain itself and winged up into the trees, their backs a-gleam. And in the swaying white mist, as if the heart of it held imprisoned light, the prismatic colors formed and dissolved and formed again, now into a perfect bow, now into glittering fragments of violet, green, and red.

The spring hats this year are wonderful affairs — an acre sown with flowers. Beyond the fountain one of the green 'busses rolled by, its top loaded with sight-seers, and the hats of the women made it a gay garden in transit down the Avenue. The benches to right and left held a

curious company — nurse-maids in neat attire, little mothers of the poor, sad wrecks of the under-world floated up to wait in the sun for the Bread Line, a young man richly dressed writing on his knee with a gold pencil (is it a sonnet to the fountain? I wondered). And everywhere, on walks and asphalt, the children swarmed, skating, playing strange, half-remembered games with chalk-marks, shouting, falling down.

I looked up. To the north, where the dusty vista of the Avenue began beneath the white arch, that perfect block of houses, red and sunny and comfortably homelike for all their dignity, laid its level cornice line against the blue sky. Elsewhere the high warehouses might close in about us — I saw my own gay Japanese curtains to the east fluttering not half-way up the height of the buildings that flank my abode — but to the north the Square remains other-worldly, domestic, decent, with ivy climbing up red walls to an even roof-line, and here and there a purple window-pane. The white arch, the sunny brick dwellings to left and right touched with ivy, the trees, the children, the roll of passing traffic, the gay gar-

dens atop the 'busses, the warm May air conquering even the omnipresent smell of dust—all were centred about the white fountain spray, flashing prismatic colors in its ring of yellow tulips. So, suddenly I knew it for an opal set in gold, a great iridescent opal dropped by careless Beauty among our dusty city ways, and left to burn forever, so priceless and so cheap. I wondered if the young man had been writing a sonnet called "The Opal" with his gold pencil. It should be written with a gold pencil. But I did not ask him. In the bottom of my heart I mistrusted that he was reckoning his margins. . . .

And now I have come back here to my sixth-story windows, and the sun is setting. The sun sets every day across the river from New York with the same regularity it observes elsewhere. But we New Yorkers seldom see it. Something is always in the way. We seldom see the sky at all. I remember one winter evening coming out of the theatre with a friend, and walking homeward down an ever more deserted Broadway. When we reached Union Square we were almost alone save for the passing cars. And he, feeling



To the north, where the dusty vista of the Avenue began beneath the white arch, that perfect block of houses, red and sunny and comfortably homelike for all their dignity, laid its level cornice line against the blue sky. *See page 137*

a presence, suddenly looked up. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "that *is* the moon up there!" I like to come here at the noisy day's end, aware of my books in the dim corners and the spirit of Mozart in the piano, to sit by the window while the sun goes down over the dingy roofs, sometimes behind the Judson Memorial tower — that misses the graceful strength of its counterparts above the plains of Lombardy because the demands of city space forbade the gradation of apertures increasing in number, one a story, to the open arches of the bell-loft, dictating instead uniform rows of windows down the entire face; sometimes behind the solid bulk of the distant Appraisers' Building; or, in winter, a near-by, towering warehouse, all windows, so that the red sun pierces it clear through, making it a hollow shell of flame. It is surprising how the dreary sameness of that expanse of roofs into the west is lost in the magic of the sunset; how season by season, night by night, it changes, is transfigured, under the glory of cloud and light.

I wonder if any Himalayas of this world are half so high, or hide behind their snow-capped

peaks a Thibet half so mystery-alluring, as the cloud-ranges of the sunset? Up into the blue they have piled to-night; range on range, white peak on peak; and Hoboken is a city at their feet, the last trace of man before the leap into the snow and wonder. Quite real they are, so solidly banked and moulded into form by deep clefts and ravines of shadow. They are not clouds, but New Jersey gone suddenly mad for the stars. The sun sinks behind them now, and their tops take fire. Above them salmon streamers drift, and where the sun has dropped is a gulf of golden light. Between them and me each smoky house-top flies its steam-jet like a plume of rose. Dusk has gathered in the city streets. The toiling ants down there see nothing, and think of dinner. But beyond my plumed field of chimney-stacks, beyond Hoboken fading into shadow, tower the Himalayas with peaks aflame, and my soul has gone forth to climb into the radiance, up, up above a gulf of gold, in quest of the sunken sun, the vision of that Promised Land no man shall cease to long for till he dies, his last steps pointing westward.

I was startled finally by the brusque alarum of the telephone bell. When I returned to the window there was only a dull sky streaked with clouds. A police wagon was clanging through the Square. There was the smell of dust. I shall go to dinner—but alone, and to some quiet café where the barbaric custom of music does not prevail. I decline to gulp my roast to ragtime. . . .

But as the sky itself refuses to make a practice of showing off thus gaudily every day, so maturity holds for us no more affecting lesson than this: that the human soul cannot be questing at all hours, and for its occasional outbreaks, its relapses into the “vagabond and unconfined,” we must pay ever more dearly, as the years go on, in spent energy and sadness. I am paying to-night. I have come back from dinner and a call, and now I hear below me a band of Italians crossing the Square toward the south, singing in parts. The tune ought to be “Santa Lucia.” But it is n’t. It is “I’m Afraid to Go Home in the Dark.” That is a sign we are assimilating our foreign population! I catch myself repeating the

inane words. Incidents of my dinner, my call, pleasant recollections of a woman's voice, the rustle of her dress, her hand-shake, come back to me — but not the memory of my sunset this afternoon. I should like to dwell on it, sitting in the darkness to live again the kindled life of that hour. But it may not be. The glow has gone. I am just one other sleepy atom in five million living in layers in New York. I will go to bed — but first a long look at the dusk-filled tree-tops, the deep dome of the sky, and the cross that burns on the Judson tower, the watchful night-lamp of our Square.

All day the city has been painted on a Japanese screen, all my day, at any rate, which began as usual at noon. I sailed down the North River on a ferry-boat into a hazy south wind, and only the unforgettable and unmistakable height and ugliness of the Singer Tower reassured me we were not floating into a picture. When Man has n't himself done something in the night to change the Babylonian sky-line on the nose of Manhattan Island — erected a new forty-story building or two — Nature sees to it that the aspect of those

mortared Alps is varied from day to day, from hour to hour. I have never seen them twice alike. And never before had I seen them at all as they were to-day, etherealized by the mist, monochromatic, ghostlike.

The sun was warm; it had not been a cheerless day. Yet the pearly mists, felt rather than seen, blurred out the horizon-line till sky and harbor melted into each other on a level field of soft gray; a black ferry-boat or two, a white gull swooping, the only break on the first fold of the screen. Then to the left, on the next fold, the Battery began, and swept up higher and higher till the final panel was crowded to the top with huddled, soaring blocks of gray, outlines merely of titanic buildings a shade darker than the field of the screen, no windows visible save here and there where the sun reflected from an angle, no color save one green copper roof and the gay ripple of the Stars and Stripes high, high up on the Singer Tower, out of the haze against the blue. Fold by fold it was a perfect composition, massing, gradation, color, everything, Japanese, save the titanic suggestion. That, perhaps, would

have staggered the little yellow workman, toiling with his silks and needle.

To-night my own view, after the red sun-ball had sunk, was a picture of the Square by a Japanese artist, lovely, monochromatic, remote. Against a soft gray sky, tower and buildings stood up in sharp outline—it is curious how mist sometimes accentuates rather than blurs outlines—blocks of deeper gray. The steam plumes, laid level by the south wind, were white feathers tossed against a pearly background. And down below, the early lamps flared out between the branches. They made the leaves that strange, unnatural green of stage-foliage. The whole scene became oddly unreal, a theatrical setting by a Japanese artist. But when I stepped back into the room, till the window framed only the soft gray sky above Hoboken, all but lost in the mist, and the gray tower and chimneys with their white feathers of steam, it was again a single-panel screen, a perfect panel, lovely, monochromatic, remote. . . .

Much has been written in praise, more perhaps in derision, of the Alpine peaks that man

has reared on the lower end of Manhattan Island. As they boom suddenly out of a fog at the voyager up the bay, too stupendous to be the work of our pigmy hands, Dantean, unbelievable, there is something terrific in their suggestion of material energy and power. They are a symbol of the nation, reared on its very threshold to awe the stranger at its gates. But, to the lover of classic form and sweet proportions, who is not so much impressed with material power as depressed with the sight of a building sixty feet square and seven hundred feet high, they may well be but a chaos of ugliness — yet chaos on so vast and Babylonic a scale that it has a kind of perverse impressiveness for all that; by dark, indeed, a ghostly splendor now, for the Singer Tower rears an illuminated shaft six hundred feet aloft and paints its spectral battlements upon the night.

But this afternoon was a new effect, common enough among the high hills, and so doubly suggesting the kinship with nature of these steel and mortar Alps. The air has been heavy and dead all day, under lowering clouds, and the smoke-

pall has gathered over us. I crossed on a ferry to observe the lower end of town, and found everything conspiring for the effect. A sea-turn had brought fog up the bay, which clung to the surface of the water and felt with lean, ghostly fingers about the feet and knees of the towering buildings. An unusual swarm of tugs on the New York side of the stream, vomiting soft-coal smoke, had hung a further curtain in the lower air, dark, impenetrable. The few low buildings on the waterfront were invisible. Invisible were the bases of the mortared mountains behind them. Marble, brick, or sandstone, they reared up twenty, thirty, forty stories out of the drifting mist and smoke, like peaks above the clouds. They were without base, without support, suspended in air. The effect was stupendous, the effect of limitless height like nothing so much as that gained from the summit of Mount Washington when you look across the billows of a cloud ocean and see the cone of Adams like a dripping rock in the sea. I returned on the same ferry. As the boat neared the New York shore, and we slipped in under the curtain of fog and smoke to

a view of the piers, the old buildings by the waterfront, the L-station up a cañon street, I felt like one waking from a dream who would fain have slept. And I battled in no pleasant temper with the swarm of homing commuters who impeded my passage from the boat — men and women who add figures and pound typewriters all day long up in those Alpine heights, save for an hour at noon, when they eat their lunches on the summits.

A little later I fought my way through Fourth Street, again against a human stream, a mighty river of sweat-shop workers flowing into the East Side: the men unshaven, dirty; both men and girls pathetically undersized, foreign, babbling in a dozen tongues. When I broke into the open, the corner of the Square was alive with them, like a stirred ant-hill. They were all so small! When I inadvertently jostled one on the walk he gave way before me so easily! If I had put out my strength I could have tossed him into the street. A whole rush-line of them would be as paper to an American schoolboy full-back. Up here, from my sixth-story windows, however, I see nothing of them. I shut out the sound and

vision of them. I wish I could forget as easily the horrid sense of physical weakness, amounting almost to disease, that came over me when that paste-white, unshaven buttonhole-maker fell away from the rude shove of my shoulder!

Midnight has passed. The wind has shifted into the west, and somewhere behind me, over that teeming East Side where the paste-white buttonhole-maker lives with six hundred thousand of his kind, the late moon has broken through the clouds. Southward, under sordid roofs, men and women are sleeping. Northward, behind those red-brick, aristocratic fronts that line the Square, men and women are sleeping, too. Down in the Square on the benches, under the lamps and the vivid green leaves like stage foliage, more men are sleeping. No women are there, thank God — though last night one was huddled behind a column of the University building, directly below the motto, "*Perstando et Præstando Utilitati*" — ironic commentary or demonstration, as you choose. Only the top of the arch is visible above the trees, gleaming white and lovely in the moonlight. Behind it, in

the middle distance, like another, smaller moon, is the face of the illuminated clock in the Jefferson Market tower. An arc lamp flashes on the far heights of Hoboken, like a setting star. The Judson cross, the night-lamp of the Square, watches over all. I can hear the fountain splashing softly, and the rustle of the tree-tops. "In such a night as this" — the words come into my thoughts, almost to my lips, for Beauty has laid her spell upon the Square and made it the magic setting for immortal verse.

And yet — those teeming tenements to the east, that paste-white, unshaven little man who fell away with sickening weakness before my shoulder!


The scene is no less lovely for the thought; Beauty walks with careless feet amid our dusty ways and scatters trophies of her spoil, be it the façade of a mansion or the gold of piled oranges on a pushcart against the dark of a foul-smelling tenement door. Yet who can look with untroubled eyes whom a thought has plagued? There are green vistas where no such thoughts be, and virgin hill-slopes under the moon. Great, restless,

million-teeming, cruel city, closing remorselessly in about the green oasis of my Square, with its opal fountain in a ring of gold, beauty you have, but you wear it like a garment for your shame, a garment with many a rent and seam. If I have sought your beauty out, if I have tried to nurse it, to dwell with it, the instinct that prompted me has but grown with the practice, and yearns now for a fuller satisfaction, a less clouded joy. I look out over the moonlit Square, over the white, gleaming arch, to the lamp on the distant heights, and know that one day I shall dare defeat, shall dare to lay my burden of ambition down and strap on the wanderer's pack of dreams, for the call of freedom is in my ears, the memory of meadows daisy-starred is tugging at my heart. Fame, what is it? "Success is in the silences, though fame is in the song." A life well lost is better than a death well won. So, on that day when courage comes, I shall arise, with only one long backward look at this my Square, and pass to where beyond Hoboken there is peace!



IX

IN OLD SOUTH COUNTY

HE State of Rhode Island is famed throughout the nation for Newport, high protectionists, and grasshopper-fed turkeys; but for those who know Rhode Island intimately her true claim to glory is her Jonny Cake. Nor is her Jonny Cake, so different, even in spelling, from all other Jonny Cake, to be found everywhere in Rhode Island. There may be a few old families left in Newport who still have the meal ground in Newport County windmills. Mr. Grenville Vernon, who belongs to such an old family, has the audacity, indeed, to maintain that the only proper meal is thus ground in Newport County,

and not in South County at all! It is difficult to account for some forms of mental perversity. But you will not find Jonny Cake on the tables of those marble villas which line the Cliff. (We make this statement without personal verification!) Northern Rhode Island knows it not, unless certain families there import the meal.

Rhode Island Jonny Cake is made of Rhode Island white corn, which is grown in old South County, along the southern seaboard between Westerly and Point Judith (to pronounce Point Judith in South County other than as half a quart and Punch's wife is to proclaim yourself, in the true Greek sense, a barbarian), and ground between soft granite millstones, slowly and tenderly, till it emerges in flat, delicate, powdery flakes. It is like nothing else for ultimate deliciousness. It was famed before the Revolution, and it is still the most delectable article of food in the United States.

Nor do we ask that this assertion be taken on our authority alone. Thomas R. Hazard, a native of the Narragansett region and belonging to an honorable colonial family still known in

Newport and New York, once wrote a book called "The Folk Lore of the Narragansett Country," devoted ostensibly to disclosing how his great-grandfather's colored cook, Phillis, was the remote cause of the French Revolution and the death of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. This book first appeared in the form of weekly letters to the *Providence Journal*. The writer had not progressed a paragraph into his first paper before a mention of Rhode Island Jonny Cake caused his mouth to water and switched him off into a parenthetical discussion of that ambrosial dish and other delights of South County, so that the parenthesis was not concluded and the revelation made regarding Phillis's share in the French Revolution, until four hundred pages of a book had been filled to the brim with Yankee reminiscence and humor of a tang and flavor that should rank the work high in the estimation of all who delight to browse down the by-ways of literature.

"The Southern epicures," began "Shepherd Tom," as Mr. Hazard was called, "crack a good deal about hoe-cakes and hominy made from

their white flint corn, the Pennsylvanians of their mush, the Boston folks of their Boston brown bread, whilst one Joel Barlow, of New Haven, or somewhere else in Connecticut, used to sing a long song in glorification of New England hasty pudding; but none of these reputed luxuries are worthy of holding a candle to an old-fashioned Narragansett Jonny Cake made by an old-time Narragansett colored cook, from Indian cornmeal raised on the southern coast of Rhode Island, the fabled Atlantis, where alone the soft, balmy breezes from the Gulf Stream ever fan the celestial plant in its growth, and impart to the grain that genial softness, that tempting fragrance and delicious flavor that caused the Greeks of old to bestow upon Narragansett cornmeal the name of Ambrosia, imagining it to be a food originally designed and set apart by the gods exclusively for their own delectation."

It was more than a quarter of a century ago that Shepherd Tom wrote. Even then he bemoaned the introduction of "cook stoves." Your true Jonny Cake, he affirmed, should be baked on a red oak board taken from the head of a flour

barrel, in front of an open fire made of green hardwood. The batter should be sprinkled with golden cream to prevent scorching, and the board propped up with a flatiron. Indeed, he declared, red oak flour barrel tops and flatirons were first used in the cooking of Jonny Cake, and only later put to more humble secondary uses.

But a very passable Jonny Cake may still be made on a "cook stove," always providing that you have real Narragansett cornmeal, properly ground, and the right recipe (which we do not for an instant intend to disclose). That is the way most of them are made in South County to-day, perhaps for one reason because red oak is too valuable a wood to be used in flour barrel tops any more. So much of modernity we must admit in South County. We must admit, too, that the old Boston Post Road is now macadamized and over it whirl in steady procession the motor-cars between New York and Narragansett Pier and Newport.

The King Tom farm is now an elaborate country estate. But the Indian names remain for every pond and stream, names beautiful to the

ear if difficult to the eye — Quonochontaug, Watchaug, Matoonoc, Shumunkanug, Pasquiset, Pawcatuck — and the Indian graves are still green on Indian Burying Hill, overlooking the great salt marshes and the sea. The swamps where the Narragansetts fled for cover are still well-nigh impenetrable save by the old Indian trails, and these trails are growing no easier to find with the passing of the years. Two feet off the Post Road, and your wheels sink half way to the hubs in sand. The motors are not invited to explore in South County!

And back in the scrub oak and pitch pines, where wild rhododendrons bloom and the dull red of the American holly berry glints in the sun — strange Southern flora in the heart of New England — you may still find, if you know where to look, the last of the Narragansetts — or so they call themselves, though the historians assure us that they are Ninigrets, in whose tribe the remnants of the Narragansetts were merged. King Tom Ninigret was their last king. He died during the Revolution. His sister, Esther, was crowned with great ceremony on a stone still pre-

served on the King Tom farm, but her reign was brief. The Indians became wards of the state, and were kept on a reservation in the township of Charlestown.

Here, on Quacom-paug Pond ("The Lake of the Great White Gull," known to the white men by the more practical name of School House Pond), was their schoolhouse, built, it is said, by the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and here was their council ring, and nearby their church. In 1885 the reservation was discontinued, and the three hundred and fifty Indians who remained were made citizens and granted in freehold such land as each had under cultivation. But Quacom-paug Pond is still preserved by men who love it and cherish its traditions, in all its beautiful wildness, and by its shores you may see the deer come down to drink.

The Indians by 1885 were hardly distinguishable as Indians, however. Inter-marriage with the negroes, descendants of the slaves which abounded in South County during the gay colonial days of Rhode Island, had bred a race more Afri-

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can than Indian. So they are to-day, and as you come across their clearings in the scrubby pines, only the fact that the cabin is surrounded by corn instead of cotton persuades you that you are in New England rather than the South. Once a year, to this day, however, these negroid Indians proclaim their ancestral pride and celebrate the glory of the Narragansetts. First they meet in their old stone church (which is closed the remainder of the year), built half a century ago on the site of the first Indian church erected in 1750. The services are conducted by an Adventist, to whose faith the tribe was converted many years ago.

After a day of celebration in and around this church, which would defy the efforts at discovery of any motorists passing not two miles away on the Post Road, the remnants of the tribe adjourn to Charlestown Beach for another day of picnicking and bathing. They come in carts and dilapidated buggies now, followed by ice cream vendors and curious summer boarders. Three centuries ago they came, it is said, to this same beach, on foot along the silent forest trails. Then they

were red men. Now they are, to the casual observer, simply negroes. And their number is diminishing every year. But the blood of the ancient savages is in them, and perhaps nowhere else in eastern America is the present so closely stemmed back to the past as in South County on Narragansett reunion days.

So much of antiquity South County holds, hidden from casual observation in its swamps and woods and up back roads of forbidding sand, with grass between the wheel ruts. But even along the old Post Road and in the little hamlets by the shores of the salt ponds which make in from the open sea, you may meet of a morning an old man with a basket, a salty ancient mariner, and when you ask him whither he is bound, hear his quaint reply:

“Deown ter the pond ter ketch a few oysters.”

These hamlets, punctuating the Post Road with a white steeple or tucked away on sandy side tracks which seem to the rushing motorist to lead nowhere but into the salt marshes, are often toned with age and the weathering of storms into a lovely gray. The little mill pond back of the gray

mill where ambrosia is still ground for Jonny Cake is covered close with lily pads, like a green carpet flowered in white and gold. The miller grinds slowly. Shepherd Tom records one miller who used to put a bushel of corn in the hopper, walk two miles and court the widow Brown for an hour, and then walk back in time to catch the last of the meal trickling forth, and to refill the hopper.

Such slow grinding is in part due to a desire for right meal. But in part, perhaps, it is due to the South County temperament, which in turn is undoubtedly due to the South County air and the vast spaces of marsh and salt pond and distant ocean and doming sky, within which hurry seems an impertinence to the Almighty. It may be the miller lives in that century-old little house near the mill, its gray shingles gay with honeysuckle vines, or it may be that is the home of some follower of the sea, gray now and grizzled as his abode, weathered of skin, taciturn, but mentally alert. If he knows you — and likes you — he will talk. If he does n't you might as sensibly try to engage the Sphinx in conversation.

It was Captain Burdick, he who could sail a boat at black midnight, without a star, across the salt pond and make an egg-shell landing at the pier, apparently by the sense of smell, since other guide there was none, who was moved to discourse on horseback riding, when a natty couple, on docked and prancing bays, once strayed down the road from Narragansett Pier into the primitive life of the real South County.

“I rode one o’ them critters once,” he said — “only once. First we went along under a free wind at about a fifteen-knot clip. We was headed sou’-sou’-west fer Quonochontaug, when the gol durn critter decided ter come about. So he put his tiller hard over an’ come about. But I did n’t. I stood right on to le’ward.”

Then the captain shifted his pipe to the other corner of his mouth, rubbed his rheumatic knee reminiscently, and let somebody else do the talking.

It may be the captain is in some way related to old man Stebbins of Narragansett, since pretty nearly everybody who is anybody in South County

is related to everybody else. Early in the last century old man Stebbins used to drop in for breakfast with Shepherd Tom's grandfather. Broiled eels were then, as they still are, one of South County's ambrosial dishes — yellow-breasted eels speared under the ice. In those heroic days the eels were served sizzling hot for breakfast. Old man Stebbins helped himself seventeen times from the gridiron, as it was passed from the fire around the table, "a steady smile playing over his features." After the seventeenth helping of eel had been disposed of, he looked Shepherd Tom's grandfather "blandly and steadily in the face," jerked his head sideways in the direction of the kitchen door, and remarked, "Them's eels, them is."

The old names persist in South County, like the old Jonny Cake, the weathered old houses, the old taciturn, dry wit, and the old occupation of oyster fishing. You will find the town of Kenyon on the railroad, and a Kenyon now owns the King Tom farm. It was old Gardiner Kenyon who lived on Point Judith many, many years ago and died at the age of ninety. He had been in

bed some days when he heard his wife tell a daughter to go for a doctor.

“Don’t bring a doctor into my room,” he cried, “I have decided to die a natural death.”

It was Hazard Knowles who declared that one of his sons was “fit for nothing but a Member of Congress.” The Perrys are still thick in the land, of the same stock as Oliver Hazard Perry, who was a Narragansett boy. You may find Perryville on the map, even though you may not detect it as you whiz through in your car. Nor have the ancient traits been changed, for all the whirl of motors along the dusty Post Road, and the groups of mushroom summer cottages along the distant beach.

A few years ago Captain Tim’s wife died. Shortly after he secured his Civil War pension from the government. And two months later he died himself. “Poor old captain,” said the village, “just as he had everything to live for!”

A returning visitor asked the stage-driver what had become of his horse Dan, long a village institution.

"Sold him two weeks ago to a liv'ry stable feller over to Kingstown," replied the stage driver. "G'lang."

The stage rolled on through the sand while a mile of scrub oak and pine was put behind. A small house appeared by the wayside, and the driver tossed the *Westerly Sun* into the front yard. The visitor was wise and waited. Presently the driver spoke again, glancing up at the bright blue sky.

"Hope they git thet paper 'fore it rains," he said. "Dan took sick a week ago. G'lang."

To the ordinary observer his expression had not changed. One who knew him well might have detected the ghost of a twinkle in his eyes. He did not speak again till, cresting a hill, the great panorama of marsh and salt pond and blue ocean was spread before the gaze. Then he said, "Rain termorrow. G'lang."

"How on earth do you know?" asked the visitor, looking at the cloudless sky and the blue, clear-cut horizon.

"Block Island's too plain," said he. "G'lang."

But certain of the ancient traits persist of a

grimmer nature — tendencies to strange superstitions, relics, it may well be, of the primitive beliefs of the Indians and negroes, grafted upon the credulous countryside back in the days when New England witchcraft was still a fresh memory, and not yet wiped out by modern enlightenment.

In the first year of the twentieth century, in a small hamlet of South County, an old woman died and was buried. Scarcely had her body been put in the ground when a series of minor misfortunes befell. A cow cast her calf; a child had the measles; a fisherman's power dory slipped her moorings and was carried down the bay; a farmer's haystack mysteriously took fire, and so on through an easily imagined list. The people of the hamlet met in council and decided that the dead woman was a "vampire" and her soul was haunting the place and making the trouble. Just how the term vampire, which they freely used, applied, it is difficult to see. Perhaps investigation could have traced its use back to some negro superstition of slavery days. At any rate, such was the term the villagers employed.

A committee was appointed who dug up the woman's body, cut out her heart and burned it, which was supposed to prevent further possibilities for mischief. This, of course, takes us directly back to the most primitive beliefs of the most primitive peoples. Probably, to many readers, the story will seem utterly incredible. Yet it is true, and its scene was Rhode Island in the twentieth century, and its actors were not savages but Anglo-Saxon farmer and fisher folk, living within easy range of Narragansett Pier and Newport. A famous scientist has recently asserted that a return of the belief in witchcraft is always possible, in the most enlightened nations. Here, surely, is data for his argument.

We have spoken of the curiously Southern flora of the Narragansett region. This Southern character belongs, in some subtle way, to the air as well, and has its real influence on the lives and temperaments of those who dwell there. In colonial days the Narragansett Plantations, as South County was then called, like the Newport Plantations, was divided up into vast estates, and each overlord owned his slaves by the scores, even

by the hundreds, living the gay, hospitable life of a Virginia planter, to the horror of Puritan Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Thomas Stanton "lordship" was four and a half miles long and two miles wide. The old Stanton house still stands by the road in Charlestown, a beautiful piece of colonial architecture, with white panelling within clear to the ceiling and fireplaces to roar a royal welcome.

On Boston Neck, five miles north of Narragansett Pier, what is left of the Rowland Robinson house, built in 1746, may also be viewed, beneath its giant willows. The old foundation stones show that the house was once one hundred and ten feet long, with a gigantic kitchen and outstanding negro quarters. Within, the old basswood staircase, deep-worn by many feet, is still the delight of architects, for its graceful balusters and exquisite drop ornaments. Over the dining-room fireplace is a faded, smoky painting of a colonial deer hunt.

But though this aristocratic plantation life of colonial days, so like the life in old Virginia, has passed from South County, leaving only a few

mansions to whisper of its memory, the Gulf Stream still sets in toward this favored spot on the coast before passing finally out into the Atlantic, and to the cool freshness of the salt Northern air is added an indefinable softness and languor which cannot be found — or so we who love South County are firmly convinced — anywhere else on the north Atlantic seaboard. Why, indeed, should the South County flora be Virginian if her climate is not Virginian, and her soil? Why should her colonial life have been Virginian, instead of Puritan? South County is a paradox, at once Yankee and not Yankee.

If you approach it from the north, you feel a decided atmospheric change as you crest the ridges in the neighborhood of Exeter. On the coldest days of winter, when Boston and Providence are shivering in zero weather and the icy blasts are howling around the Flatiron building in New York, you may walk through the pine woods of the Narragansett country without an overcoat, not because the mercury stands any higher there — or only a few degrees higher at most — but because there is a subtle difference

in the quality of the atmosphere, a tempering softness. In summer, too, you may lie out in your boat on one of the salt ponds and watch a blue heron fishing, or the languid sails travelling down the horizon far out beyond the yellow line of the beach, without being conscious of the heat, without being conscious of much of anything, in fact, but earth and water and sky and the sweet delight of being alive. So one lies in a boat on Chesapeake Bay and hears as in a dream the chant of a negro fisherman,

“ Mary weep an’ Martha moan,
You better leave them chillun alone — ”

coming sweetly over the water. It seems almost as if South County had been torn by the Gulf Stream, soil and foliage alike, from the Southland and deposited upon alien New England.

Geographically, South County is a part of the southern shore of Long Island rather than Connecticut. Its sea-line, all the way from Westerly to Point Judith, is a narrow strip of yellow sand, sometimes not two hundred yards across, and dotted here and there by rows of summer cot-

tages. Behind this protecting bar of sand the salt marshes stretch back inland for several miles, barren of trees, to the higher ground where the Post Road runs and what seems, beyond the Post Road, like a great level wave of the land rolling down to meet the sea and marsh. Alternating with these marshes, however, are blue salt ponds, — Quonochontaug, Ninigret, Green Hill, Trustom and Point Judith — kept salt by narrow inlets through the sand-bar, but completely landlocked, shallow, and incomparable for small sailing craft and oyster beds. At the inland heads of these ponds are the South County villages and the Post Road.

The mariners of South County are not deep-sea fishers but navigators of these inland waters, expert in oysters and eels. The shores of the ponds are broken by small promontories crowned with oak, bay bushes, and huckleberries, and the great marshes between are now and again checkered with cornfields or squares of pasture, and adorned by ancient houses as gray as the gray stone walls about them, sitting solidly under the vast dome of sky, no less a part of nature

than would be some giant boulder, hewn into symmetry.

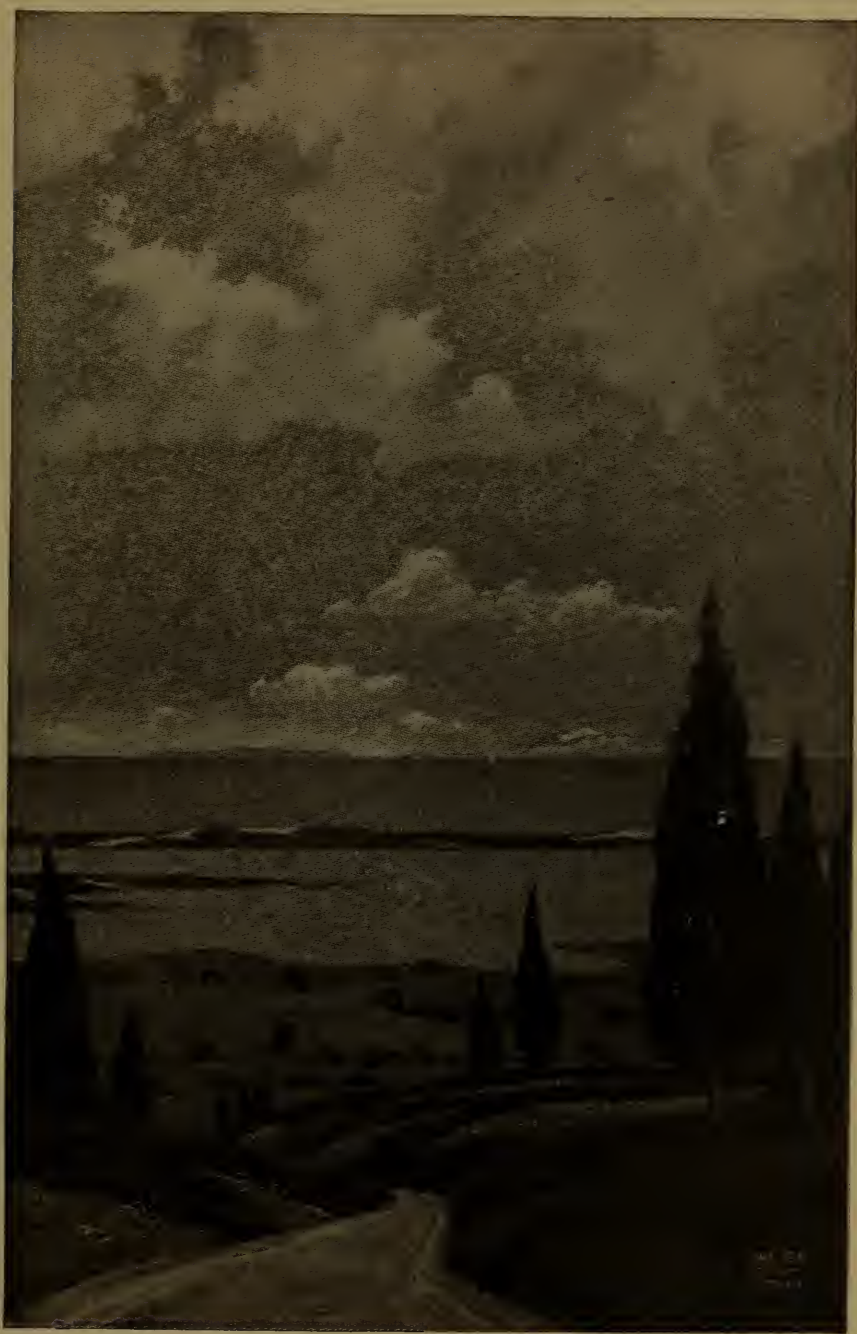
If you climb the low, wooded ridge which presses down from the north all along the Post Road, your southward view discloses to you the entire configuration of the shore. At your feet is the ribbon of the road, winding, perhaps, through a little village with its white steeple and gray grist mill. Beyond that is the great, level, golden-green plane of the marshes and the sparkling water of the salt pond, dotted with sails. Four miles away you catch the yellow line of the sand-bar, laid as with a ruler from east to west, and beyond that the blue Atlantic, with Block Island like a faint mirage on the sky-line. Over this vast expanse of land and water domes the sky. It is a view incomparably spacious, considering the slight elevation needed to attain it, and a view wherein the charm depends to an unusual extent upon the design, as it were, of the floor of the world, the broad yet intricate pattern of salt marshes and ponds and ribboning road. Always the soft salt air blows over it, and on the hill at your side the most

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tempting of huckleberries grow in hospitable profusion.

But the charm of South County is not confined to the seaboard view and the salt water. Turn inland from your hilltop and you will find a cart-track, or perhaps only a path, winding into the pines and oaks. Follow this track a little way, and all sight of the sea is lost. You are in the deep woods. A mile, two miles, and you catch the glint of water through the foliage ahead. A few steps more, and you are on the shore of a fresh-water pond, which stretches out before you half a mile or so, and then, bending around a promontory, disappears into the silent mystery of the forest. There are no houses, no boats, no hint of man beyond the dim cart track at your feet.

If you try to follow the wooded shores in search of an outlet, you will, perhaps, sink into Narragansett swamp mud up to your waist, but you will find no outlet. The outlets are subterranean, and their termini are supposed to be those springs of crystal water which gush out of the banks of the salt pond two miles away. If, how-



Four miles away you catch the yellow line of the sand-bar, laid as with a ruler from east to west, and beyond that the blue Atlantic, with Block Island like a faint mirage on the sky-line. *See page 171*

ever, you are wiser in woodcraft, or are familiar with the region, you may find a track around the pond on higher ground, a track along a glacial moraine, which looks as though it had been worn deep into the sand by the passing of countless feet long years ago. It is an old Indian trail. Follow it, and presently you may come upon a ring of stones — the old Narragansett Council Ring — and then upon a human habitation, the old Indian schoolhouse, converted into a forest lodge.

If you enjoy the hospitality of that lodge, hospitality which includes incomparable Rhode Island Jonny Cakes baked by a negroid Indian woman who, as a girl, went to school in this same building, and thus enjoy the use of one of those green canoes so protectively colored that they are barely visible down against the wooded shore, you may steal up to windward at early morning on a deer and her fawns drinking at the end of the promontory, and see the white tails of the little fellows disappear into the woods, like the hindquarters of so many rabbits, when your camera clicks.

You may wander, too, for miles through the woods and swamps, guided by almost invisible trails, coming upon still, black little rivers and unexpected clearings where the Indians live, the women hoeing the corn and tending the chickens, the men smoking luxuriously in the sun. But, for all your careful observation of the dim, criss-crossed trails and cart-tracks, you will remain in South County many a long day before you are certain that on the following morning you can go again to the cabin or the stream you visited the afternoon before. You start out hopefully — nay, confidently. You take the first turn to the right, then the second to the left, by the wild rhododendron bush, and walk a quarter of a mile — and find yourself in a swamp! Then, as like as not, you consume the rest of the morning finding your way back. After such a trip, you understand better the difficulties our forefathers encountered in subduing the Narragansett Indians. There are two infallible tests of a true acquaintance with South County — can you find your way through the swamp and forest from Wood River Junction to Cross's Mill, and can you mix and

bake a Rhode Island Jonny Cake? If you can meet these tests, you have two accomplishments to be proud of.

After a few days spent in the Narragansett pines, on the shore of a fresh-water lake, with only the occasional sight of a negroid Indian in his hidden clearing to remind you of human habitations, with deer in the brush and black bass in the pond, it is a curious sensation to walk southward but a scant two miles and suddenly to see burst upon your vision that great panorama of marsh and sea and sky, to see houses and ships, to smell the salt instead of the pines, and to hear, coming up the white Post Road at your feet, the honk, honk of a motor horn.

The motor passes in a cloud of dust, its fat and over-dressed occupants bespeaking, even from your lightning view of them, cities and our twentieth century so-called civilization. You peer through your screen of huckleberry bushes at their cloudy wake, fast drifting over the stone wall and into the woods, driven by the balmy south wind, and it seems to you like the wraith of a dream. When it is quite gone you come down

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the hill, cross the road into the pasture beyond, and wander cross-lots to the little gray village. There is mail for you, and a nod of welcome from the hospitable post-mistress in the tiny post-office. The miller stands at the door of his old gray mill across the road. You can hear the rush of water over the wheel, coming from the lily-gemmed pond behind. The rumbling stones are grinding out white cornmeal, soft and flaky, for your future delectation. An old man strolls up the lane from the pier, a heavy basket on his arm. He has been ketchin' a few oysters.

Down at the foot of that lane your boat is moored. The day is fine, the wind steady. The sunlight dances on the Salt Pond. You stroll down the lane, too languid and genial and well-content for hurry, take a drink from the spring under the willow of the nectar which always accompanies the ambrosia of Rhode Island Jonny Cake, shake out your sail, fill your pipe anew, and slip out over the dancing Salt Pond. You fear no giant waves behind the far yellow line of the protecting sand-bar. You have only to feel the tiller pressing gently at your ribs, to

watch the blue herons on the shore, to see behind you the white steeple of the village against the wooded hills, around you the green, level marshes, before you the blue of the open sea, and over you the sky.

Hurry and turmoil seem very far away, the rushing motor-car again a dream. You are in a quiet corner of the New England of the past, but a corner wind-kissed from the south, languid, warmer, more provocative of lazy dreaming. You are in old South County, and your cup of summer happiness is full, for even as the sun stands in the meridian, warning you it is noon, and you put your tiller hard over, there comes to your nostrils the scent of Jonny Cake cooking, three miles against the wind, and as your little craft takes the bone in her teeth and rips up the pond your mouth begins to water for the ambrosia of Olympus.



X

THE DISMAL SWAMP



ALL my life I have cherished a secret passion to visit the Dismal Swamp of Virginia. I have at last slaked my desire, and am burdened to speak of the experience, not because, like most satisfied desires, it has turned bitter in my mouth, but because it has n't; because the Dismal Swamp, though it is n't dismal at all, is one of the most fascinating spots on the Atlantic seaboard and one of the most accessible relics of the wilderness left standing east of the Rockies.

I cannot now remember where my desire to visit this supposedly mournful region first came

from. I suspect in part it came from reading Tom Moore's poem about the Lake of the Dismal Swamp, and the maiden who paddled upon it her ghost canoe, and in part from reading Mrs. Stowe's "Dred." Over east of the North Reading road, toward Danvers, there used to be a swamp into which we youngsters penetrated for a mile or so, finding high-bush blueberries, horn-pout pools and wet feet, but never getting to the farther side. It was terribly easy to lose your way in this swamp. You had to carry a compass. To be sure, nobody ever did lose his way in it, but that was because we were so wise in woodcraft! Coming home at night and lying on my little bed, this swamp grew into my dreams with all its mystery and its gloom and its terrors magnified, and became the Dismal Swamp, where I crept through its tangle to the weird and lonely lake where the lover had "hollowed a boat of the birchen bark," and I sometimes saw that strange apparition, or, at the very least, a fugitive slave pursued by bloodhounds. From that day, the words "Dismal Swamp" have been to me curiously fascinating and potent over my imagina-

tion. In my heart I knew that some time I should stand in the swamp itself.

Well, I have stood there at last and camped on the shore of its lake. I saw no apparition in "a boat of the birchen bark." Indeed, there being no birches in the swamp, the chances of it were somewhat diminished in advance. Less fortunate than "Porte Crayon," the American magazine illustrator who went into the swamp with his sketch-book in 1856, I saw no gigantic negro peering warily through the reeds, with a finger on the trigger of his rifle. I did not even see any water, outside of the lake and the canals. Although it was early May when my companion and I entered the swamp, and the spring of 1910 was not a dry one, we could walk dry shod everywhere that we attempted it. There were no mosquitoes nor yellow flies to annoy us so early in the season. We saw no snakes. The air was warm and balmy by day, cool and soft by night. Innumerable birds sang in the wilderness about us. The prevalent northwest wind ruffled the dark waters of Lake Drummond, that silent pool in the heart of the unbroken forest, till they

danced merrily. The days were one long delight, and the nights so still and deep as only he who has been in the wilderness can understand, while a little moon rode up out of the cypresses and turned to silver the white mist on the water. The Dismal Swamp remains to-day, in spite of the loggers and the attempts at agricultural reclamation, much as it has been for a century. It has suffered, in popular estimation, from its associations. Intrinsically, it is the opposite of dismal; it is a virgin paradise.

The Dismal Swamp, like all the great swamps along the South Atlantic seaboard, was made by the elevation of the old sea-bottom. This sea-bottom was elevated in such a way that the new land could not drain properly for lack of slope and because of the retarding vegetation, and the vegetable deposit of centuries has laid over it a spongy soil, in some places so deep that you can thrust a stick down through this peat-like crust for eight or ten feet without striking solid bottom. On the western border of the swamp, from Suffolk, Va., down to Reddick's Store, N. C., the old coastline can be plainly seen, the swamp meet-

ing this "bench," as the geologists call it, as clearly as the sea meets the shore. It is called "the coast," in fact, by the swamp people. The swamp extends some thirty miles south from Deep Creek, Va., well down toward Albermarle Sound in North Carolina. It is from ten to twenty miles wide, and Lake Drummond is nearly in the centre of it, though north of the state boundary. At least five rivers rise in the swamp, but their sources cannot be detected. They ooze from somewhere under the surface of the marsh deposit.

After the close of the Revolutionary War, George Washington organized a land company with the first object to reclaim the swamp for cultivation. From a point seven miles south of Suffolk, a canal was cut in to Lake Drummond, which is still known as the Washington Ditch. The swamp, however, was too extensive to be reclaimed by such small engineering feats as were then possible. In after years the canal was used for hauling out lumber, and the company made a fortune. Toward the close of the eighteenth century, a larger canal, fifty feet wide and

deep enough to admit the coastline vessels of the day, was cut through the swamp, almost due north and south, from the Elizabeth River at Deep Creek to the Pasquotank River in North Carolina. This gave a continuous inside passage for ships from Norfolk, Va., to Albemarle Sound. A second canal, to feed this one, was cut in to Lake Drummond, which was dammed with a lock to store water in the dry season. As the mud and sand from the main canal was thrown up into high banks, it retarded the slight eastward drainage of the swamp, making the western portion more swampy, the eastern portion less so. As a result, for many miles to-day the land to the east of the canal is green with farms, dotted with houses and crossed by roads (such as they are), while fifty feet to the west, across the sluggish ditch, rises the unbroken wall of the wilderness.

In all, perhaps, a third of the original one thousand square miles of the swamp has been reclaimed, along its edges chiefly. But though the lumber men have been again and again into the remainder, it stands to-day a vast and, save

by the waterways or logging roads, almost impenetrable jungle of giant trees and rank undergrowth, the home of wild animals, of deadly snakes, of birds and fish, and of exactly two human beings. It was into this relic of the wilderness that we plunged, but a day's journey from New York.

The air was raw and cold when we slipped down the North River past the towering skyscrapers of Manhattan and looked with contempt upon the poor commuters crowded on the ferryboats like cattle, going home after one more day of toil. We patted our khaki-clad legs with pharasaical satisfaction, and sniffed for the salt round Sandy Hook. We woke up the next morning in the balmy, soft air of Chesapeake Bay. At Norfolk we stocked up with provisions, tried in vain to buy a history of Virginia or even a decent map, and at three in the afternoon boarded a tiny steamer called the *Nita*, bound up the Dismal Swamp Canal.

Two steamers ply daily from Norfolk up the canal. The *Nita* does not make the complete trip through, however. A larger boat goes to

Elizabeth City, N. C. These boats carry passengers, mail and every sort of miscellaneous freight. They bring out the farm produce and carry in the equipment. They are extremely busy little craft, in their leisurely, southern way, with crews of innumerable negroes. We chugged along past the Navy Yard, up the winding south branch of the Elizabeth River, where an endless procession of southern pines solemnly kept us company beyond the waving tide grasses on the banks, under a couple of railroad bridges (built for two tracks to indicate the spirit of hope which animates the South) and finally entered the canal at Deep Creek.

Here they raised a drawbridge at our approach, and we stopped beneath it, slung a gang-plank out into the dust of the road, and disembarked a bag of oats and a woman with a baby. On the bridge-rail hung two young negresses, chewing tobacco and making bold eyes at the crew. The village of Deep Creek straggled off in a discouraged sort of way down its one white street. The captain (who also steered the boat and collected the fares) shouted for haste. But

haste seemed foolish. We were entering another order.

Passing through the northern locks of the canal, we met two schooners coming out loaded almost to water-line with clean-smelling cypress shingles. As the water foamed through the gates, it shone in the sun with every shade of burnt amber and brown—the strange, dark water of the Dismal Swamp colored, it is said, by the juniper and cypress roots. Then we headed south down the arrow-like path of the canal, which held ahead the mirrored reflection of the bramble-covered banks and the great trees growing beyond. We had entered the Dismal Swamp! My companion, the artist, who even more than I had dreamed for years of this day, sat silent on a bag of fertilizer in the bow and pulled excitedly at his pipe. You have to be excited to sit on a bag of fertilizer!

The banks of the canal are so high and so overgrown with verdure that even from the upper deck of the steamer you cannot see over them. However, to the east telegraph poles bespoke a road, and now and then the roof of a house was

visible, or the face of a negro child peering through the bushes. Every mile or two we drew up at an opening in the bank and slung out freight to the waiting negroes, who drove mules in little two-wheeled carts, without rein or bit, after the century-old custom of the swamp. Driving consists chiefly of language. Through the gaps, too, we could see farms stretching out, level as a Western prairie, reclaimed from the forest. But in the western bank there was never a break, nor any cessation in the steady, monotonous march of the vine-draped gums and cypresses or the darker ranks of the pines.

Presently a thunder-shower came on. We had gone twenty-four miles from Norfolk. It was six o'clock, and rapidly growing dark. As the rain soaked down, we ran alongside of the "Cap'n Wallace place" and threw off the Cap'n's mail. Cap'n Wallace is the squire of the swamp. Years ago, the Wallace family reclaimed a square mile on the west bank by sinking a drain under the canal to carry off the water eastward, and now have a large and prosperous corn and hay plantation, dotted with negro cabins quite as if

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the war had never been. A mile beyond the Wallace homestead is Lynch's Landing, where the lumber is loaded on schooners, and here we disembarked and prepared to spend the night, for it was impossible to get into Lake Drummond in the rain and darkness. We were driven east a mile, to the village of Wallaceton, little more than a lumber camp surrounding the great saw mill, where we secured an apology for supper at the "hotel" where the lumbermen are fed. Wallaceton has a store, a church and a school. It also has the inevitable source of Saturday night inspiration, and only too many negroes and whites willing to be inspired. At supper we found a New Yorker who had been down there in the swamp a year — for Wallaceton is really in the swamp, on reclaimed land — searching for a process to prevent gum timber from warping. He drank up gossip of the city greedily, and inquired with special (and quite comprehensible) eagerness for news of the famous restaurants. Nobody keeps a cow in Wallaceton, apparently. You drink condensed milk in your coffee and on your cereal. And the coffee! — And the meat! —

However, this truly dismal feature was forgotten the next morning when we rose into a new-washed world, shipped our stores aboard a motor-boat, and turned out of the main canal into the feeder which comes down from Lake Drummond.

“Porte Crayon,” when he entered the swamp in 1856, went in from Suffolk, on the other side. The Washington Ditch is much narrower than the feeder, so that the trees often meet above it; and “Porte Crayon’s” motive power was furnished by two negroes, on a tow path of logs, while ours was furnished by gasoline. Otherwise, his description, written fifty-four years ago, in *Harper’s Magazine*, fits perfectly to-day. The same great turkey-buzzard sailed languidly on ahead. The same tall, slender reeds made a feathery hedge along the bank. The same wild profusion of “myrtle, green briar, bay and juniper hung over the black, narrow canal.” The same hushed stillness, broken only by the calls of the birds (and, in our case, by the steady chug of the engine), stole over the senses and seemed to blot out all memory of the outer

world. It was a glorious, dazzling morning. In the black stream ahead the great trees were mirrored so clearly that image and object were of almost equal distinctness, and the perspective of the canal was like a long tube. We saw little into the swamp, for the flowering jungle on the banks; but over the jungle rose the gums and cypresses and pines and oaks and maples, twined with enormous creepers and bearing their pendent vines like hair. Across our path ahead flashed the red of a cardinal bird. A flicker was tapping off to the left; a water-thrush greeted us from the bank. The Carolina wren uttered his pleasant call. The whole forest about us was musical.

We penetrated up this magic waterway four miles, disembarked in shoal water at a rough landing, climbed the bank, and tugged our baggage along a path trodden through the high reeds a few hundred yards further, coming out into a little clearing. In this clearing was an unpainted, two-story cottage, a shed, a vegetable garden with fruit trees and grapes, the locks which regulate the outflow from Lake Drummond and an

extremely military tent. Sitting on the lock gate, clad in the shirt and trousers of the U. S. Navy, was a young sailor shooting snapping-turtles with a Krag-Jorgensen rifle! As the Krag rifle is sighted to two thousand yards and will kill at three miles, there was something incongruous in his appearance.

“Why don’t you use it on a bear?” asked my companion.

The sailor ejected his shell. “Bring on your bear,” he replied.

There seemed to be no adequate rejoinder, so we moved on to the house. This house is occupied by Cap’n Jack, keeper of the locks. Cap’n Jack has a telephone, and when they want more water in the canal you hear the imperative tinkle of its bell here in the silence of the wilderness. Cap’n Jack belongs to the “swamp folk,” as he will tell you. He was born on the margin of the swamp, at Deep Creek, and has always lived in its shadow. Before the Civil War, when he was a small boy, he can remember dark nights when his father, a strong Union sympathizer, stole into the swamp with provisions for the fugitive

slaves. Cap'n Jack himself wanted, when the war came, to go with the other boys to the front, but his family prevented. He will tell you how a Union troop galloped into the yard one day and took away the gun he had concealed. He can neither read nor write, and his cabin in the forest is not palatial to say the least. But he welcomes you to it with a native hospitality that might belong to the ancient régime, and hobbles behind you solicitously (Cap'n Jack has "rheumatics"), beating off his too hospitable dogs, and calling out for Aunt Jane, his ancient housekeeper, to give the strangers whatever they want, "yass, sir!"

The tent, we found, belonged to a party of young sailors on shore leave from the Portsmouth Navy Yard. We had planned to camp on the captain's clearing, but as they had the only available site, the captain insisted on our sleeping in an upper chamber of his house, where a feather-bed, long disused, spread a dusty and dubious welcome. Aunt Jane, he apologetically said, was n't able to cook for us, but we could use her stove. Under the circumstances — the cir-

cumstances being Aunt Jane's kitchen! — we were not displeased with this arrangement, and we passed our nights for the most part under a roof, eating breakfast and our night meal, of our own preparation, on the veranda.

The captain keeps several flat-boats and a long canoe, dug out of a cypress log, which he rents to hunters and fishermen. Half an hour after our arrival we were paddling on up the canal, under the dark shadows of overarching trees. After perhaps an eighth of a mile we saw open water ahead. We dug in our paddles. The boat shot over the black, silent water, and suddenly emerged from the wall of the forest into the Lake of the Dismal Swamp. Our efforts ceased abruptly. In silence, in astonishment, even in awe, we gazed at the scene before us, at the realization of our dream.

This portal to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp is like nothing else. The lake itself, though the gazetteers of a half century ago, and even "Porte Crayon," give its width as seven miles, is a round bowl in the forest not more than three miles across. This distance, however, partly from the

character of the shore, which has no distinguishing marks whatever to guide the eye or assist the judgment, partly from the curious greenish haze of the farther banks, is oddly deceptive. The lake looks ten miles across, and the forest wall on the farther side seems like a level line of hills. Into this body of water, untroubled by any boat, ringed only by the eternal silences of the wilderness, your way leads between what first seem rows of bleached mastodons' bones, and out in the water, a hundred feet from shore, like twin lighthouses marking the channel, stand two sentinel bald cypresses, their gray, quick-tapering trunks reared on a wicker island of roots, their crooked limbs bearing a shred of green, delicate foliage. They suggest gargantuan reproductions of those Japanese dwarf trees which come in tiny pots and seem to be a thousand years old. They are dead and white, and yet they are alive. They seem to intimate that the inroads of the water have left them, the last heroic survivors from the primeval forest, to fight it out alone. They are the most striking and the most haunting feature of the Lake of the Dismal Swamp,

accentuating its strangeness, its desolation, its suggestion of untold centuries of silence, its wild charm.

As we rowed out into the lake, we could see these huge cypress ruins growing in the water all along the shores, some of them quite dead, some of them still bearing umbrellas of delicate foliage. On the shore itself were the trunks of many more, some felled by the wind, but the majority by the axes of lumbermen perhaps a century ago. And the entire shore, extending well out into the shallow water, is gray with the bleached cypress knees, looking as if it were strewn with the bones and tusks of prehistoric animals. The knees of the cypress are usually from two to four feet long. They grow up from the roots above the surface of the water, and have, apparently, been developed by the tree to secure air. By this device the bald cypress is enabled to grow in the water. Wherever a cypress grows in water, whether this water is perpetually above the surface, or, as in the swamp woods, somewhat beneath the surface, the knees come up from the roots till they are clear of the

water-line. According to Professor Shaler, the lake in reality has not risen and killed the cypresses, but the forest has pushed them out into the lake, the vanguard of its advance. It is perpetually pushing its marshy deposit slowly out, and restricting the borders of Lake Drummond. The fact, however, that no new cypresses are coming up in the lake would seem to disprove him, and to indicate that when the level was raised by the dam a century ago too much water gradually killed these ancient and magnificent trees.

For a long time we paddled our canoe in among these strange groves in the water, where the waves lapped through the tent-like roots and the bleached and weather-worn trunks whispered of untold antiquity. From a few hundred yards out on the lake it was impossible to tell which trees marked the entrance to the canal, and there was no gap visible in the forest wall. We were alone in the wilderness. In spite of Professor Shaler's statement in his monograph on the Dismal Swamp (prepared for the U. S. Geological Survey in 1888), that "bird life is only moderately

abundant," we heard from the shore a perpetual symphony. Landing, we attempted to penetrate the forest wall. We squeezed through a hedge of ten-foot tall reeds, and under the shadows of the huge black gum trees nearly stepped on an oven-bird's nest, the mother hurrying off through the grasses with a pretended broken wing. Professor Shaler had told us that the bird life of the swamp was "characterized by the general absence of the ground forms." He also said that "rodents are conspicuous by their absence," and we saw several squirrels. As we met no snakes, and found the ground under our feet perfectly dry, we lost all thought of dismalness. But the swamp jungle is quite difficult enough of passage without water. Giant tree-trunks block your path. The enormous blackberry vines, in white bloom during May, tear you viciously, and the cat briars are even worse. The innumerable bushes and creepers and tall reeds bewilder and obstruct. Up the straight trunks of the gums and maples huge vines twine, as thick as your leg, and their pendent foliage gives to the trees a feathery softness and beauty, shadowing every

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forest vista and rendering them bewilderingly similar. Without the sun or a compass for guide it would take an Indian to steer a course through the swamp. Only last spring a bear hunter, who had been familiar with the place from childhood, wandered lost for two days and nights, and was given up by his friends. It is no wonder the slaves fled to it before the war, and often eluded capture for years, even raising families in its jungled maze. It is less wonder that the swamp is said to have held in years past hundreds of wild cattle, strayed from domestic flocks on the borders, and existing without the supposedly imperative salt. These cattle were popularly believed to be ferocious beasts. Cap'n Wallace says he has heard the bulls fighting with bears at night, and once, at least, the body of a bull and the body of a bear were found lying side by side, mutually slaughtered. We saw none of these cattle during our stay in the swamp; apparently they have all been killed. 'Possums and raccoons were the extent of our game. But many bears are killed in the swamp every year by the hunters, chiefly in November, when the leaves are off the trees and



Giant tree-trunks block your path. *See page 197*

the little blue gum-berries, which the bears love, are ripe.

Rowing across the lake, we came upon another dug-out canoe, in among the cypress knees, so protectively colored that it was invisible two hundred yards away. It held a negro and two white boys, fishing for black bass. On the shore, which at this point attained the astonishing elevation of three feet, and so was crowned with pines, were two hunters' camps, roughly built and half hidden in the dense foliage. They were then unoccupied. Between them a brook trickled down. We walked up this brook a few hundred feet, and came upon a merry picnic party of men, women and children, and a rough shack owned by a "swamp man," who will house you for twenty-five cents a day. This shack is at the locks which mark the end of the Washington Ditch. A second canal, known as the Jericho Ditch, also ends here. It, too, runs northwest to Suffolk, but is now impassable. The picnic party had come in from Suffolk by rowboat, up the Washington Ditch, a favorite outing for the inhabitants of that town. In a Virginia gaz-

etteer published in Charleston in 1856, it is recorded that "The Lake Drummond Hotel, a favorite public house," occupied this site, and had become "The Gretna Green of the region." But it had disappeared when "Porte Crayon" was in the swamp. He records, however, that a visitor to it once poured the dark swamp water from a bottle, thinking it was brandy, and diluted it with white whiskey, taking that for water. The more water he used the stronger grew his drink, till he was at last saved by the entrance of the proprietor. The present shack bears little resemblance to "a favorite public house," but it affords a shelter, and during the spring and autumn is frequently occupied by hunters and campers.

We paddled up the ditch which, it is said, was surveyed by Washington himself. More than a century of rank, luxurious verdure has completely obliterated every sign of man in its construction. It seems a natural waterway. Being but fifteen feet wide, the great trees arch over it and trail their pendent vines and mosses in the still, hushed air. The sunlight sifts through in

mottled patches, making jewels on the black water, which is so protected by the reeds along the bank that only the ripple of a boat seems ever to disturb it. For five miles or more it creeps through this almost tropic wilderness, silent, peaceful, beautiful beyond belief.

That evening a young moon hung in the tree-tops over Lake Drummond and bathed with a silver glow the night mist steaming up from the water. The great cypress ruins out in the water rose like white phantoms above this mist, white phantoms of some prehistoric forest. The invisible water lapped eternally through their roots. The scene was poignantly lovely, yet lonely, too, with the soft forgetfulness of a Lotus Land.

In the morning we woke up to the carolling of myriad birds. To wake up in the Cap'n's little clearing in the swamp, where the great green wall of the forest seems perpetually in the act of pushing his cottage off into the ditch, and to lie drowsily while the morning sun rides above the cottonwoods, while the fresh breeze waves the pendent hair of the black gums against the

sky, while the birds' chorus shrills and pipes and calls from every side, to breathe the soft air and hear the green rustle of the forest, is a sensation of exquisite delight. The day was again cloudless and pleasantly warm, though we had slept under two blankets and a quilt. The sailors were busy fishing or out tending their traps. Now and then we could hear the crack of a rifle. They had captured, alive, two raccoons and a 'possum, which they had caged up to carry back to the fleet. Like so many campers, they had wantonly killed innumerable birds and squirrels as well, and tacked the wings and tails over their tent door. They had also shot several cotton-mouthed moccasin snakes — the most deadly viper of the swamp, though it avoids you whenever possible, and Cap'n Jack says he never heard of anyone being bitten — and were preparing belts of the skins.

We left them and plunged into the woods. The enormous blackberry thorns are no respecters of person or garment. They tear khaki as if it were cotton. But we crawled through and beat down our way to a huge maple tree, where

a bunch of mistletoe as large as a bushel basket was growing far up, and managed to climb high enough to cut it down. The swamp abounds in mistletoe and holly, though the task of getting into the trees, or detecting the mistletoe amid the bewildering profusion of foliage and vines, when you do get there, is a hard one. The trees, too, growing so closely together, reach great heights before they put out any limbs, and their trunks are too thick for ordinary climbing. In the rich, green gloom of the woods the birds still kept us company. We counted in the space of a morning more than twenty varieties, including the rare water-thrush, the beautiful cardinal and the friendly and humble chickadee. Up in the mountains of Virginia you can sometimes meet sixty varieties in a tramp across a county. But we saw enough in the swamp to make us wonder at Professor Shaler's statement that bird life does not abound. The swamp is lyrical with birds from morning till night, at any rate in spring. No matter how occupied you are with some other interest, you can never quite lose consciousness of their presence, and sometimes the tapping of

the woodpecker rings like a distant woodman's axe on the hollow trunks of the cypresses. In winter, too, the open stretches of the canal are alive with ducks.

As we rowed round the dark, shallow waters of Lake Drummond till we could at last tell by a sort of instinct where the canal emerged from the forest wall, and no longer had to follow the shore till we stumbled upon it; as we wandered long hours in the tangled and luxurious forest; as we listened of an evening to the quaint talk of the old Cap'n about swamp folk of the past and the days when bloodhounds followed the escaped slaves into this jungle; and then as we fell into deep sleep amid the cool hush of the wilderness, New York, if we spoke of it at all, seemed a thousand miles away. It was reported by Professor Shaler that by lowering the locks of the Dismal Swamp Canal and cutting transverse ditches, the whole area could be drained, and made to yield sixteen million dollars a year in agricultural produce. The lumber yield, he declared, is only one hundred thousand dollars a year, at most. But there are thou-

sands upon thousands of square miles in the South still uncultivated which do not require costly drainage, and there is only one Dismal Swamp. A delegation from the Virginia legislature visited Lake Drummond last spring, in considering a scheme to set apart at least so much of the swamp as immediately surrounds the lake for a state reservation. This plan should surely be carried out. Except, perhaps, during three or at most four months in summer, the swamp around the lake is free from insects, from malaria, from infection of any sort. The scenery is wild and beautiful. The spot is rich in tradition, easily accessible from either side by waterways of alluring charm; and yet the forest stands to-day to all appearances as it has stood for centuries, a virgin wilderness. From its denseness it is unusually adapted for a game preserve, where bear and deer still abound. It is a paradise of birds. The lake can easily be stocked with fish. It should be kept as it is to-day, for all time, a refuge and a delight for the citizens of Virginia and for the nation.

Our exit from the swamp was sudden and

dramatic. Sickness called us out, and the obstreperous telephone, tinkling incongruously in the wilderness to remind us of an outer world we wished to forget, suddenly reassumed its beneficent importance. The Cap'n's two negro boys piled our luggage into the cypress-log canoe, which was fitted with oars, and with long, tireless stroke pulled us down the feeder to the main canal. It was late Saturday afternoon when we reached Wallacetown. Many of the citizens of that metropolis of the swamp were already in a state of Sabbath cheer — not induced by the brown swamp water, concerning which they make no mistakes. Was there an automobile in the town? The question brought forth only apologies. Again the telephone came to our aid. We called up a garage in Portsmouth, twenty-five miles away. An hour and a quarter later the twin lamps of a motor-car shone through the gathering gloom of the village street. We hailed this incongruous symbol of civilization with joy, when a few hours before we would have cursed it, and, tumbling in, we began our exit from the swamp, not, as we had planned, once

more by the slow, languid, other-wordly canal, as if we were drifting back into the days before the war, but with all the speed a bad road permitted, in a high-power motor-car.

The road ran, evidently, several miles east of the canal, occasionally past farms where startled faces gazed at us from lamp-lit doors, but most of the time through a dim plain, where tall, ghostly reeds hedged the road in front, lit by the glare of our searchlights. This was the Green Sea, a part of the swamp so-called because, in the absence of trees, it is covered with waving billows of reed and cane. But we went through woods, as well, where the searchlights pierced up into the gloom, throwing suddenly out of the shadow some gigantic trunk, while the ghostly lane of reeds ran ever on ahead. The car lurched through puddles and bumped over bridges. Once we flew past a farm where a garden party was in full swing, lanterns hanging from the trees, and the horses tethered by the fence reared at our approach. We finally crossed the canal at the village of Deep Creek, over the bridge which had been raised to let our boat pass through some

days before, tore down the narrow village street where the white fence palings seemed almost to graze our wheels, and settled down for the final run up a state road to the city.

Once on this smooth macadam, the swamp became suddenly the thing unreal. It was behind us, gone, a memory. The purring motor-car, the city lamps that presently reddened the sky ahead, the scream of a distant train, commerce, haste, worry, the rush of modern life were the real things again. We paid the chauffeur (a colored man, who also owned the car) a ridiculously small fee, considering the distance and the state of the roads, and hastened on our journey by the ordinary carriers of commerce.

That is not the ideal way to take leave of the Dismal Swamp, but it is not without its vivid suggestion of contrast. Life in the swamp is slow, simple, primitive; it still keeps its flavor of a vanished century, like the languid peace of its canal. The swamp itself is still, to all intents, a virgin wilderness. Yet we tore out of it in a motor-car. There are few rude spots left in America so easily accessible; and there is no

spot more beautiful, more haunted with old associations, more musical with birds and strange with ancient cypresses and lovely with the spell of the trackless wilderness than the Lake of the Dismal Swamp.



XI

THE ABANDONED FARM



I AM sitting as I write in a sunny corner of the pasture behind our house. Though it is but the first week in September, we had a frost last night, and the sun is grateful. The potato plants are already brown, the fodder corn is withering, the leaves of the pumpkin vines are drooping round their stems. This early frost is a great blow to the farmers of our valley, one of their besetting discouragements. The valley stretches southward from where I sit ten miles to the great blue bulk of Moosilauke, which is beautifully framed through our barn door. The valley is walled on the east by three mountains, averag-

ing four thousand feet in height and springing directly up from the farms. Indeed, the pastures eat their green way up the slopes into the timber. These three great hills have been lumbered in times past, but by the grace of Heaven — it was no fault of the lumbermen — the fire did not follow, nor the destructive landslide. They are once more going back to their dark, billowy green of spruce and hemlock. Across the level meadows at the valley bottom, beyond the elms which fringe the little river, the Ham Branch, rises a parallel wall of much lower hills, velvety with upland farms or timbered with second growth where the white birches gleam in the trailing shadow of a cloud. I am perched high enough in the pasture to see, both north and south, the steady procession of farmhouses, a quarter of a mile apart, along the ribbon of the single road, each set like a gem in its acres of green mowing, its squares of corn, its pastures sloping up past picturesque sugar houses into the shaggy mountain timber. New Hampshire holds few views at once more rugged with frowning mountains and soft and intimate with pastoral charm.

We are but four miles from a well-known village to the north and the fashionable summer hotels. As I look at the neat and prosperous farms nearby, I realize that their prosperity is largely due to this proximity. We are in the summer-boarder zone. To each one of these farms comes from one to three thousand dollars annually (in some cases more) of "city money." But southward, following the white ribbon of the road toward the wild northern shoulders of Moosilauke, as the town and the railroad recede the case becomes quite different. A mile, at most, and we have left the summer-boarder zone. The air of prosperity ceases; we seem first to step back into a more primitive community lingering on, and then into the ruins of a vanished community. We step into the land of abandoned farms, into a half-wild, beautiful, pathetic desolation.

Two or three miles up the road is the next village. There is a "general store" and post-office combined, close to the road, redolent with the mingled odor of calico, kerosene and chewing tobacco. Across the road is a tiny mill-pond

and mouse-gray sawmill, now seldom used. Beyond the mill-pond rise the dark hemlocks, and over their spired tops looms the summit of a mountain. Here in the centre of the village are not more than ten houses, three of them boarded up and abandoned. Through the window-chinks of one you may see the crayon portraits still hanging on the walls and the crocheted tidies on the chairs. Just south of the mill-pond is a deserted creamery, covered now with flaming posters announcing a new brand of tobacco and the county fair; and just beyond that is the town hall. The brook flows under the town hall, and the lower story is the smithy. The hall is reached by an inclined plane, as if it had once been a carriage shop. The unpainted walls of this quaint municipal building are also plastered with posters, and the forest trees brush its roof and tint the aged shingles a beautiful mossy green. Then the road winds up a hill and passes on toward Moosilauke.

Soon the valley widens out. Side of the road, facing a tamarack swamp, is the white church, guiltless of spire, and guiltless of minister save

for the Sunday afternoon visits of a pastor from the northern village. There are no houses near it now; it represents the ancient centre of population. But an eighth of a mile away an abandoned farmhouse sits in the fields under the shadow of the sweeping wall of the mountain. Under the shadow of this wall, too, is the village cemetery, all the graves running east and west, no doubt in obedience to the old Calvinistic custom, so that when the final trumpet sounds the occupants may rise facing the east and thus avoid confusion on that busy morning. Goldenrod and asters bloom amid the neglected stones. You look across the wild burial place to the tangle of the forest and as you lift your eyes they range up a spruce-clad slope, then over a rocky shoulder, to the summit of the mountain, four thousand feet above you. Only the birds break the silence — in June the sweet fluting of the phœbies and in the mournful twilight the golden throb of the hermit thrushes.

The road winds on now past scattered farms, some abandoned, some looking as if they would soon have to be, while the great shoulders of



An abandoned farmhouse sits in the fields under the shadow of the sweeping wall of the mountain

Moosilauke begin to lose their blue and to show green forests or the horrid scars of the lumbermen. The valley narrows in again, grows wilder. After you have passed through the skirts of a logging village, crossed the Wild Ammonoosuc at the timber dam, and penetrated two miles into the ravine where the Benton trail goes up the mountain, you come suddenly out of the woods into a clearing, and set in that clearing amid golden, waving oats is a little house, silvery gray where its weathered boards show through the tangle of wild woodbine which has clambered over the black apertures of the windows, pulled the gutters half off, and twined triumphantly about the great chimney where the last sprig of it flies like a banner at the top. Behind this beautiful, lonely ruin rises the sheer wall of Moosilauke's northwestern shoulder, eight hundred feet of first growth hard timber, fortunately of no use for wood pulp and so spared, and then one thousand feet more of scarred and desolate and rain-washed slope — a pathetic testimony to the American passion for Sunday newspapers. Out of sight beyond the clearing is a tiny hospiti-

able hotel, used by the mountain climbers; that is the secret of the growing oats. Southward from here the road enters the "tunnel" between Moosilauke and Clough, a forest way, and emerges into a more fertile land. But the last ruin in our valley is the most beautiful. A few more years, and the woodbine will have pulled it down, aided by the racking, rotting winter storms. The weeds will wave a few years longer yet in its cellar hole. Then nature will obliterate all traces of it; its memory will sleep with that of the mountain pioneer who hewed out its beams from the timber in his clearing.

This lower end of our valley is but one of many in this northern region, spots where the myriad automobiles of the summer tourists never penetrate, where the summer boarder has as yet failed to come as a salvation, and whence of the native population all but the aged or the inert have fled, yielding to the march of modern life and the changed demands of modern society.

It is a fourteen-mile drive from our house, over a hill which might be called "Breakneck Hill" if there were not already a Breakneck Hill on the

Bethlehem road, to a village where you, Reader, though you may know your Bretton Woods, your Profile House, your North Conway and Jefferson, have never been and of which probably you have never heard. The motor-cars go through the Franconia Notch nowadays in a steady procession. I have counted the license tags from twelve states on an August Saturday, while walking from Profile to Echo Lake. But the motors never go to this forgotten village. There is nothing to go for, except one of the loveliest prospects in all New England and the melancholy charm of human habitations abandoned and lapsing back to wilderness.

The road thither takes you past a strange contrast, in people and in epochs. On one side of the divide, the side still facing toward the summer resorts, there spreads to the right of the road a huge stock-farm, dotted with perfectly kept buildings and sleek, high-test cattle, the union under one hand of a score of farms. It is owned for summer amusement by a millionaire manufacturer, but it is scientifically conducted, and for several seasons now has yielded an annual profit.

To the left is a dilapidated house, with a more dilapidated barn, where lives an old man in the accumulated filth of seventy years. It is his boast, so they say, that he has not washed his face for ten years. His estimate seems conservative. Lacking character, ambition, incentive of any sort, he ekes out a bare living from his scrubby clearing. Yet his case is not typical; he is a miser; he has thousands of dollars in the bank. Once he owned great tracts of timber up the slope, and held on to them till their value rose. But it was too late then for him to learn how to live. He is one of those "characters" which our lonely countryside breeds — the loneliness and the constant intermarriage of relatives. When he dies, one more abandoned farmhouse will be added to the valley's toll.

Over the divide, we are in a different landscape. Looking back from the summit, we see the Franconia ranges piled up, with the rocky peak of Lafayette lording it over them, and far off the blue Presidentials. Once on the other side, the country rolls in doming billows of woodland and pasture, without grandeur but with all

the soft charm of the Berkshire Hills. Instead, however, of the rich estates of Stockbridge and Lenox, the perpetual gardens and more or less beautiful houses, here there are, between half-mile stretches of second-growth timber where an abandoned stone wall shows through the glint of the birches, mute witness of fields once under cultivation, only the silver-gray ruins of farms and stables, their surrounding fields untilled, but still annually mowed by invisible hands. Some of the houses, indeed, are gone completely, save for a pile of bricks where the chimney stood and the ring of the foundation stones, half buried in fireweed and clematis. The barns have survived longer, for unseen hands have propped them up to hold the hay which is still reaped in the clearings. One I recall especially. Not even the foundations of the house are visible now, but the barn stands in the orchard, its great doors fallen down, its boards yawning widely, and through the vista of its brown, dead hay the lovely picture of gnarled apple-trees in the abandoned orchard, a gray stone wall, and then the green rolling country drop-

ping away to a far valley and the blue hills of Vermont.

If you stand at a corner of this barn, beside a ruined sled-runner serving now as a trellis for tansy, raspberry vines and jewel-weed, you can look for some distance toward the southwest and count half a dozen other abandoned farmhouses or barns, like elephants browsing over the hills. Two are off the main road, up lanes now choked and impassable. One was the blacksmith's house, presumably, for in a cellar hole close by are the bellows-frame and the rusty forge. Between them the timber is growing back down the slopes, some of it the precious spruce, much of it sugar maple, but none of it, alas, the former glory of our northern woods, white pine!

As the road draws nearer the village, not all the houses are abandoned. One splendid old place, as square and dignified as the colonial farmhouses of the earlier and richer settlements of Massachusetts, like Deerfield or Concord, is now lapsing into decay; but farther on a little house, built with its wood-sheds and out-houses to form a carpenter's T-square, is gay with gera-

niums, golden-glow and tousled-headed, barefooted, peering-eyed children. The road dips here through that marvel of to-day — a grove of first-growth pines — where you pause astonished in the hush of their cathedral aisles, and suddenly rises again to a prosperous farmhouse recently bought and reclaimed by an ambitious farmer from a neighboring town, who has for a trifling investment doubled his product. Then the road sweeps on into the most beautiful bit of landscape in New England, a statement none of my readers can well challenge, for none of them has seen it!

Cultivated fields, checkered with squares of mowing, barley and corn, slope to a rich, grassy intervale. Beyond the woods rise twin-hill summits, dark with spruce; and exactly framed between those dark-green hills is the whole blue bulk of Moosilauke — that and nothing else. The mountain looks down like the monarch he is into this pastoral intervale, and he suggests more potently than the sight of all the ranges could do, the piled-up splendors of those other peaks beyond the divide. He himself, too, gains in bulk by the isolation; his blue flanks are tremendous

over the corn and barley and the intimate meadow brook.

Another climb of the road, and Moosilauke disappears once more behind the near hills. You are at the village cemetery, set upon a windy summit and commanding the lovely prospect of the now expanded intervalle. This cemetery is neatness itself. Not a stone is broken, not a weed grows on the graves. Yet not a living creature passes, either. You wonder who keeps these graves so neat, as you wonder who cuts the hay upon the abandoned farms. The town is healthful, too, for upon one stone you read of "The Widow Susanna Brownson, Born 1698, Died 1801.

"Her duty finished to Mankind,
To God her spirit she resigned."

The Widow Brownson might almost have grown up to blush at the late Restoration comedy, gone through the Pope period, and died with a copy of "The Lyrical Ballads" in her hand! It is, unfortunately, much more probable that she read only her Bible and *The Old Farmer's Almanac* — good reading, both, but hardly associated with

the re-birth of nature in English poetry. It is something, however, to have spanned a century. The letters on her stone are picked out with new gilt. The invisible spirits of this deserted village have kept her memory green.

Beyond the cemetery, along the ridge of the hill, rises the village spire. The village is at the cross-roads. One road runs along the ridge, the other plunges over it and crosses the intervalle like the smooth, straight drop of a great toboggan chute. A New Hampshire Gazetteer of 1850 says that there is a store and post-office. Doubtless there was in 1850, but no signs of the combination remain. At one of the four corners of the cross-roads is an inhabited house. At two corners are deserted houses — charming houses, too, with carved window-caps and colonial, pannelled doors. At the fourth corner is the dilapidated church and ruined horse-sheds. Up the road is a tiny schoolhouse, sadly in need of paint, and a dwelling where the only sign of life is a horse tethered in the door-yard. That is the village. On the transverse road, ribboning across the intervalle hundreds of feet below, however,

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are strung like beads a few farm buildings, and they rise with the road on the farther slope, two miles away, to the timber line. In this beautiful, breezy, forgotten place no people pass, no sound breaks the stillness. Only the memory walks of a vanished community; almost, it seems, of a vanished race.

The zummer air o' theäse green hill
'V a-heav'd in bosoms now all still,
An' all their hopes an' all their tears
Be unknown things ov other years.

Yet read the signboard at the cross-roads. This village is but four miles from a busy modern town, on the main line of the railroad. It is, in reality, easily accessible. Just as it was easy once for its younger folk to drift down the hill to wider activities and a better living, so it will be easy for the return tide to set back up the hill. Its abandoned farms may yet be reclaimed, not, perhaps, by those seeking to work them for a living, though with their re-grown timber, their maple sap, their fertile intervalles, that would not be impossible, especially should science and co-operation be applied to the task; but by those

seeking summer homes near the soil, amid beautiful scenery and pure air. Land is cheap in this forgotten township, and the scene as fair as any in this beautiful state. Like so many other of our New England hill towns, it waits its re-birth from the cities, from the very cities and the society which have drained it of its life-blood and left it an exquisite gray ruin of our once rugged pioneer life.

The true explanation of the abandoned farm lies not so much in the native quality of the farmers — or their supposed lack of quality — as in the fact that a pioneer society cannot exist surrounded by civilization. Civilization opens a Pandora's box of desires and ambitions and discontents, and it creates, too, an increased expensiveness of living which a pioneer society, without changing its methods, is unable to meet. To make the farm pay under the new conditions requires a knowledge that the pioneer, slow and simple by nature, too frequently cannot acquire. Take the matter of lumber. In our valley twenty years ago several parcels of woodland were sold for seven and one-half dollars each. Last year

they were resold to the pulp men for one thousand dollars each, and that was less than their value. It is the men who originally sold their lots at such ruinous prices who have been forced to abandon their farms. Two years ago the farmer next to us sold the standing timber off his woodland for one thousand dollars. Some of it was first-growth white pine, the rest good spruce. One thousand dollars seemed "a heap o' money" to him. The purchaser took out twelve thousand dollars' worth of lumber and pulp in a winter, but stripped the forest to bare soil in the cruel process. Our neighbor, had he been wiser to the demands of the outside market (and more energetic!) might have had it all for himself, and saved his young trees for another forest into the bargain. But in his eyes lumber had always been the cheapest thing on the place, to be had for the swing of an axe.

So everywhere in these once gloriously timbered hills the "lumber kings" and the paper manufacturers have acquired their timber for a song, stripped the slopes to the bare rock, and left desolation behind where judicious lumbering

by the owners themselves (or under government restriction) might have preserved the forests in perpetual rotation and yielded an annual income. The one man in our fast vanishing village up the road who has kept hold of his forests and worked them properly himself drives in his motor-car past the dilapidated houses of his neighbors.

But we have one citizen whose unfortunate lack of foresight even we can appreciate. He is close on ninety years old now, and last Fourth of July we got out the great ugly yellow landeau in which General Grant was hauled by eight pair of horses from Franconia to the Profile House on his famous tour of the country, we decorated it with streamers, and we rode "Old Man Cheeney" through the town, as a tribute to one whose luck was so colossally bad. Old Man Cheeney once owned the Profile Notch, and he sold it all for one hundred dollars! To-day, of course, it is one of the most valuable tracts of land in summer-resort America. It must be admitted, however, that some of us pity the old gentleman more than seems necessary. His life has not been perceptibly shortened by depression.

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He allows he had a very good time with that hundred dollars!

To come down to lesser altitudes, I remember a wonderful walk in the northern hills of Massachusetts. The road, a mere trail, led up "steep's yer hand" from the gorge of the Deerfield River to a fifteen-hundred-foot plateau commanding a glorious prospect. The first house on this plateau was falling to ruin. The second had fallen. The third was still inhabited. We knocked at the kitchen door to inquire the further direction of the road, which appeared suddenly to end in the chicken-coop. The girl who answered our knock was tall, pink-cheeked, as beautiful as any town or country could breed, and wore her gingham apron with patrician unconsciousness. No rustic bashfulness nor halting grammar marred her speech. It was we who were embarrassed by the surprise of her loveliness.

"What a life for her on that desolate farm!" we said to each other as we found the runaway road again and tramped on toward the distant village.

But that night at the village we heard how she

had worked as a maid for the "summer folks" and sent herself to school and college, how she had learned to play the violin, how she now taught school "down to Springfield winters." When her parents die, she will not return to the farm unless it be to reclaim it as a summer home. And what a home it would make, with its spring of icy water, its windy prospect of the world, its sugar grove and garden patch, its rambling barns, its berry fields and pastures and slope of timber! But would it not be possible in her case to trace the first discontent to the "summer folks," the first opportunity to earn a schooling to them also, and so, ultimately, what may mean the reclamation of the whole beautiful plateau?

Into that village, high on its hill beside the inevitable mill-pond — the village of the Reverend Preserved Smith and still retaining in its religion his liberality and independence of thought — the rural telephone has penetrated.

"It's a great blessing, 'specially if you're on a party line," said our hostess. "And we're all on party lines. Wait —"

She went to the instrument, called a number,

and remarked, "That you, Bessie? What's this I hear 'bout you 'n Jim breaking it off?"

We watched her smile as she listened to the answer. Then she said, "How'd I hear it? Why, Mrs. Asa Parker told me."

She held the receiver free of her ear and beckoned us close. We heard distinctly an indignant voice exclaim, "Why, Sarah Bowers, I never said no such a thing!"

"I thought I'd catch her," said Mrs. Bowers, when the telephone conversation was closed. "As I told you, the 'phone's a great comfort to us all!"

But much more than the telephone is needed to make life in these hill towns either physically comfortable or intellectually satisfying to a people who by blood and nature are capable of a richer life. Far better abandoned farms than a race of poor whites evolved from the pioneer stock of the Puritans! But far better still that these farms, scattered over a land as lovely as the heart could desire, should once more blossom with crops and cluster in prosperous and contented communities.

This will be brought about — it is, indeed, already being brought about — by a natural process of coöperation between the cities and the country, the former giving to the latter a summer colony with its wider outlook, its better standards of living, its energetic and progressive ideas, to enliven the whole year and wake ambition and effort, the latter giving to the former of its once abandoned farms and its ill-kept and unappreciated timber for summer homes and grounds. Nor is it easy to say who is benefited the more.

We in our valley, and many others in similar valleys among the beautiful New England hills, have no desire to see our farms reclaimed by a reversal to feudalism. There are spots in New England where great wealth has clustered, where individuals have “bought up” five thousand acres, erected one hundred thousand dollar villas, stocked their pastures with imported cattle and their formal gardens with exotic plants, and reduced the Yankees of the region to a kind of unacknowledged vassaldom. We want none of that. We ride over the stone roads of our

one great landed proprietor, to be sure, with gratitude; but we neither envy him his formal garden nor 'desire more of his kind. We want to keep what farmers we have on their own farms, teaching them how to forest scientifically, how to attend to their soil and the rotation of their crops, affording them a summer market by our presence, helping them to find a winter market for cream and eggs and apples and timber without the profit-eating middleman, and by our intercourse with them and their children we want to make their lives a little richer. Then we want to see our abandoned farms taken up by those from the cities who have a little money to invest in a summer home, who delight in country life and country freedom, who will love our streams and woods and rocky hills, who know the primitive hunger "to grow their own garden truck," and who will mingle in our community on the terms of goodwill and equality which its ancient stock deserves. We are not rich in the valley, but we are still almighty independent!

And our abandoned farms are so cheap! No

one who buys a farm with a good view, good air, pure water, and plenty of trees is making a poor investment. There are at least eighty million more people in the United States than there were when our independence was won, but there are no more acres in the territory we now cover. A New England school teacher with a family of children bought a small house, still in good condition, a barn 60 × 40 feet, one hundred acres nearly half wooded, including the shore of a lake and a fine mountain prospect, for five hundred dollars. "Why pay summer rent?" he asks. For even less an architect bought an abandoned ruin, down a forgotten lane, where only the strayed cows sought shelter under the tottering shed and the saplings by the wall had grown to trees which obliterated the view. The hand-hewn beams of this old house were the effective base of the scheme of remodelling. The trees were trimmed to disclose the nearby mountains. The old cinnamon rose-bush, trained to active life again, linked the dwelling with the past. And now the sugar grove and garden patch yield sufficient for a large family. The whole outlay, judged by the

result, has been but a trifle. I know of a farm of one hundred and fifty acres, fifty acres heavy woodland, with a sugar grove, a tight house set on a hill commanding a prospect of the mountains, a big barn, and golf links within easy driving distance, which sold two years ago for seven hundred dollars. The owner yearned for the nearer society of his kind during the long winters and "set up in business" in the town. The new owners, however, seem quite contented on that breezy hillside. Their wood alone is worth the price they paid. They refuse to sell at anything like the old figure, as I have reason to know. They have energy and ideas and are making even this rocky, upland farm, which has no valley land, yield them a living.

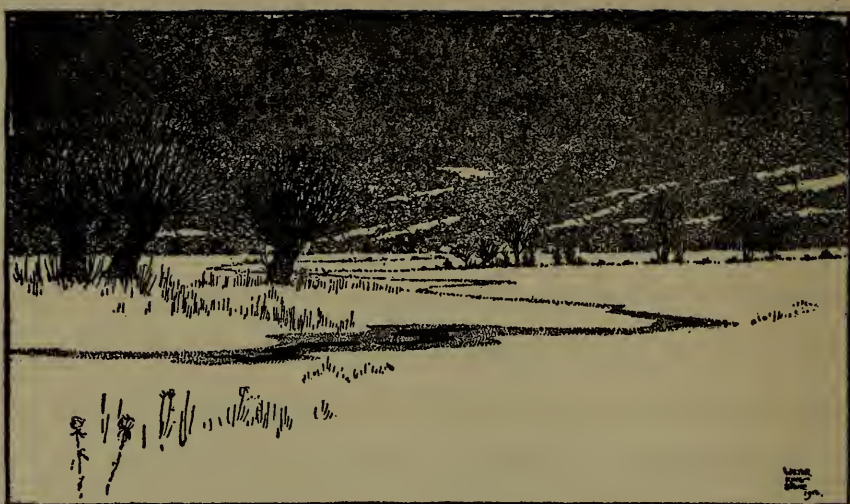
There is much talk of mission work among the "rural poor" of New England, and doubtless there is much need of it, in every rural region through the whole country, especially the need of visiting nurses and agricultural and sanitary education in the schools. Your farmer is as slow to apply science to his sink drain as to his timber patch or his potato field. But the mission work

our rural population most need is a re-stocking of the countryside with men and women of the new age, who will at once bring them a market for their produce and the stimulation of more advanced ideas and the touch of the outer world. Ex-President Cleveland, living on his reclaimed abandoned farm at Tamworth, N. H., with that democratic simplicity which was part of the man, in touch with all his neighbors, whether farmer-folk or summer colonists, inspiring new and better roads and drawing thither other colonists of his stamp, was, perhaps, almost the perfect example of the true missionary to the country. In New Hampshire, too, the sons or grandsons of the farmers have in many cases come back to establish summer homes "on the old place." Their natural affection for the town is stirred; their stay lengthens each year, or at any rate the stay of their families; their children become more than half little countrymen. Their stock is better for the return, the countryside is better. Their children grow up with something of the old traditions, the old health, the old background of a country boyhood, for which nothing

in this world is quite a substitute; and the countryside is saved from one more ruin, one more melancholy ring of stone where the fireweed blooms, and richer for better roads, preserved forests, and neighboring farmers inspired to wiser efforts.

I love the gray abandoned farms of our mountain intervalles. I love to tramp alone up the road and sit on a log by the silent mill, looking down the deserted street and musing — if even that word does not imply too much concentrated thought — on the simple, primitive community which has passed. But it is a melancholy loveliness at best, and one which will not endure, for our abandoned houses are almost all of wood and are rapidly decaying, while the eager forest pushes down upon them, hungry for the land that has been stolen from it. Even more melancholy is the thought of thousands upon thousands of human beings cooped up as no human beings were ever meant to be in city flats, and little children learning of life between three-hundred-foot stone walls. The country needs these people, and these people need the country — most of

them more than they can guess. And I see our problem not as one of "missionary work" in any usual sense of that term, but as one of re-populating our beautiful hills and gracious valleys with the stock of the cities — stock that shall come to us as "summer folks," to be sure, but not as transients; that shall come as men return to their fathers' hearths, that shall "come back home" — for it is not until a man owns the soil he stands upon, looks from his door-stone to the shadowed plumage of his trees, and plunges a spade in the ground, that he knows the true meaning of home. Let the cities have their flats, and let us live in them so long in the year as we must; but shall that be all of life, that, and perhaps a summer boarding-house or a fussy motor-car? I look down the green peace of our valley, walled by its wooded hills and the great blue heave of Moosilauke, I see the gray roofs of our abandoned farms, beautiful in their clearings, jewels on the thread of road — and they seem to me an irrefutable reply.



XII

A BERKSHIRE WINTER



IT was the seventh of November when winter began for us in the Berkshires. The day opened dull and gray, with a damp chill in the air. The chickadees gathered in the shelter of the Norway spruces before the house and pecked eagerly at the suet wired to a crotch. Under a leaden sky we drove northward along the road that skirts Stockbridge Bowl. The wind was keen out of the northwest and the white caps were chasing over the lake and splashing on the beach. Between us and the sources of the wind, West Stockbridge Mountain opposed its long, copper-colored battlement, copper-colored with the dead

foliage still shredding the hard timber. The leaden clouds were racing up over its summit. Even as we watched, there was suddenly a puff of white vapor, like smoke, enshrouding its northward point. This smoke rapidly spread along the level summit, wiping it from sight, swept down the slope, wiping out the mountain, was caught by the wind and swirled over the lake. A spit of snow, a stinging flake on eyelash or lip, and then the white vapor was upon us. We were shrouded in winter. It was as if the long range of the mountain had been our protecting battlement, invaded, captured, overrun by all the cohorts of the frost and storm.

The next day we woke into a picture-book world of sunshine and dazzling white. Every long, graceful limb of our Norway spruces was bowed with its burden, and the pines behind the house rested their white loads on the roof. As we looked from our windows, we seemed to be shut out from the world, to be dwelling in a frosted Christmas card. But the snow melted rapidly. By afternoon the roads were clear though muddy. We walked southward toward

Monument Mountain, and came upon a newly ploughed field. Between each brown ridge of soil ran a furrow filled with snowy white. These beautiful parallels led over a doming ridge, like a striped carpet, to the feet of a red house tucked away amid its dark-green spruces. The design was exquisite for all its ruled primness. On the mountain the snow had not melted, and High Pasture looked as if some giant had dropped his napkin there. A red sunset illumined the vista of our drive when we reached home again, and glancing across our garden, which was in heavy shadow, we saw the dun hillside ablaze with the reflected glory, as if autumn had suddenly come back. But there was to be no more autumn for us. The snow which had melted speedily returned and did not melt, and there followed a long season of such exquisite colors and woodland mysteries and roadside loveliness as the city dweller knows nothing of. Indeed, the man who knows the country only in summer has but little conception of nature's most beautiful effects, and as we tramped on our snowshoes through deserted "formal gardens" and down the lanes be-



The next day we woke into a picture-book world of sunshine and dazzling white. *See page 239*

hind the closed and boarded-up summer estates which dot the Berkshire hillsides, we often wondered what the owners find in town to compensate for these lost months, when autumn stains the woods and winter creeps through them with its glory of color on a key as different from summer's key as minor from major, and then spring, resurgent, comes again, with apple blossoms in her hair. Perhaps the price of their estates is this lost vigil of the under-seasons, if winter be an under-season rather than the crown of the year! If that is so, we breathed pharisaical thanks for our poverty, as we cast one more backward glance at the deserted formal garden and the boarded mansion, and plunged into the wonder of the woods. Our house is small and humble behind its Norway spruces, but the fire is always alight on its hearth and there is always suet for the birds.

There is a curious delusion that winter is a season without color. It is only a season with different color. Once live this season out close to mountains, forests, fields and stretches of cultivated valley, and you may discover such lovely

colors and such odd combinations as you never dreamed, or even days of absolute prismatic dazzle, reducing summer, by comparison, to a tame green velvet. Winter, to be sure, has its moods of black-and-white, when pictures are reduced to their simple elements of line and chiaroscuro. But even these are fascinating, as if nature were bent upon showing you that she is not dependent on her color-box for her charm.

In early winter, when the snow is yet light, you may walk up a back road through the timber and note where a wagon has turned off up a logging trail. The snow has melted in the wheel tracks, making two brown paths where the dead leaves show through. Those tracks have all the rich irregularity of the lines in an etching. Presently you come upon a brook, following it into the woods. It runs through the white carpet, quite black as if laid on with a free brush loaded with ink. There is ice in the back waters, and that is black too. The dark pines rise from its banks, straight, geometrical. Nature to-day is drawn, not painted, washed in with black-and-white.

But emerging from the woods, even on a gray day without sun, color is sure somewhere to meet your eye, though it may be only the iron-rust brown of a tamarack swamp or the tawny red of a roadside willow. These browns and reds of winter are exquisite in their subdued richness, and under certain conditions of light they are thrown into combinations with other colors, at once daring and beautiful. It is toward the early winter sunset that the combinations are most effectively brought about. The valley lies quiet under its mantle of snow and ringed with its lovely hills. The frozen river winds through fringing willows. Tramping southward we see the willows on Muddy Brook like a screen of fantastic tracery across a white field, isolated by snow and sky, composed and bitten sharply like an etching. Presently the far-off blue dome of Mount Everett comes into view, cleanly outlined against a pale and luminous sky tinging into green, for sunset is drawing on. The snow-feathered slopes of Beartown Mountain to the east are turning pink. Pink changes slowly to purple, to amethyst. The ring of hills that wall

our valley stand up like jewels. Beyond the unbroken white of the roadside meadow the edge of the swamp wears a shadowy veil of the same color, but subdued, mysterious. Out of the swamp rise the rusty tamaracks and lay their rich reddish-brown in delicate, smoky tufts against the amethyst hills. Only Mount Everett far to the south remains a pure, ethereal blue under the green sunset. The winter world is still. We hear our own footsteps creak on the frozen snow. Everything is cool, peaceful, and the color chord of sky and hills and rusty swamp is like the opening chord of some *andante* by Mozart, sad only with the wistfulness of serene and perfect things.

But the winter colors may be gay as well. For sheer ecstasy of delicate color, what can match the lavender stalk of a blackberry vine rising out of the snow by a half-buried stone wall, and shining in the sun? We grow enthusiastic over the pink of Japanese cherry blossoms splashed charily upon a screen. Here is a subject for a screen by our New England roadside — the field of virgin white snow, the horizontal design of

gray stone wall, and rising with a graceful curve the lavender stalks of the blackberry vines. It is as Japanese as anything in Japan, even to the gray chickadee perched on the topmost spray! Then there are the tawny tiger-coated willows, which sometimes rise almost like a flame against a background of evergreen or are flanked by the silvery white of the birches. In the woods, too, the green of summer persists till winter is in full command. On the southern slopes of the mountains we have come upon ferns still flaunting through the snow and partridge berry vines scratched up into sight by some hungry bird; and always the bright sun reflects the gleam of the birches and throws the evergreens into brilliant relief.

How the woods improve in winter, too, over the desolation of the formal gardens! The garden fountain is boxed up, and the sundial. The rose-bushes are packed in straw and broken pine boughs. The clipped and mathematical evergreens are pathetic in their stunted formality, as they are mercilessly cut out against the white snow and the dazzling landscape beyond. Mi-

nerva's bust on her pedestal amid the naked tree-trunks at the edge of the woods presides over the desolation, as disconsolate as the boarded fountain and the shuttered house behind. But we point our snowshoes up the forest path, brushing the snow from the laden boughs, and presently in a mountain clearing we come upon another garden where nature has been the sole designer, to the confusion of Man.

For all we can say, the level acre of snow before us might cover roses and flower-beds. It is the dazzling foreground of the composition. Beyond it, the hill drops away, and at the rim, set as formally as you please but trimmed only by the wind and sun, is a hemlock hedge, one tall tree in the centre flanked by green of lower growth. To left and right birches and chestnuts complete the composition, and beyond rises the steep hillside on the one hand, drops away the valley on the other, drops to the rolling white fields, the lake, then rises again some miles away to the blue wall of a mountain. Juggle with nature as you will, plant and prune, rule and trim, somewhere in the woods and hills behind your

house she will excel you, make all your work look ridiculous and mean.

Perhaps by some association of ideas formed long ago in childhood, a "white Christmas" has meant for me not so much a frosted, dazzling morning as a still, quiet evening when the red lights of a house amid evergreens shine friendly over the snow. Was it some Christmas card which caught my childish fancy, or a paragraph out of Andersen, or a sight of my own home with the evening lamps aglow, which has fixed this association in my brain? I cannot say. But when Christmas eve drew on last year the old association haunted me, and as darkness enveloped our quiet village street I stole out into the white mystery of new-fallen snow and slunk off through the garden. Reaching thus by devious backways, including the cemetery, the end of the street, I turned toward home, encountering nobody save a child, who was ecstatically staggering under a huge bundle. From the windows of each house the lamps were shining, making golden squares of warm light amid the trees and over the snow. The dim, forgotten pages of my

childhood turned back in my brain. I felt, without being able to say why or when, my father's arms lifting me up, and saw through sleepy eyes a door opening a golden welcome in the night. A strange, half-remembered story of some cottage in the winter forest, where a wood-chopper lived with his children and witches were about, floated pleasantly through my consciousness. I drew near my own house. Through the Norway spruces of the drive its window squares were gleaming. It was mine, my home! The warmth was crackling from my hearth! The welcome of my loved ones waited me! Like the veriest Sentimental Tommy, I pretended I was an exile returning. My heart was actually beating high as I opened the door. The smell of supper greeted me, the delicious warmth of wood fires. I gathered her I love hungrily to my heart, but I could not tell her why. One cannot explain such things as that, the mysterious linking with all one's emotional nature of a golden window square across the winter snow.

Neither can one fully analyze that melancholy death in life which accompanies an untimely

January thaw. Some morning the south wind sets in, the mercury rises higher and higher, a languid, drizzling rain comes over the mountain, and by the following afternoon the brown ridges are showing through the snow on the ploughed lands, the sloppy roads are stripped to their under layer of ice, and from all the earth rises a thick, enervating steam, so that one might be moving in a sea fog. Only the tops of the high hills stand up above this vapor, as if they were suspended in mid-air. It may be in the country we are too dependent on the weather for our moods. At such a time, at any rate, bicker raises its ugly head in many a household, and one tears up at noon and consigns to the spluttering Franklin stove the literary creation of a morning.

And then comes the resurrection of the frost. Forewarned by the growing chill at night, so that in the darkness we have sat up in bed and hauled added covering over us, we wake into a new world of dazzling wonder. The rain and mist have frozen on every bush and twig, on every wire and fence, on pole and limb and even on the very sides of the houses. The trees are

bowed with their load of jewels, and even the modest birches are brazen with diamonds. The world flashes like a prism in the sun; the humblest shrub in the garden is a burning bush of rainbow tints. Slipping and falling on the perilous ground, we climb hastily to the top of the nearest hill before the wonder shall melt. It is a strange, transformed universe we look down upon. Beyond the foreground the prismatic colors are lost. The upland pasture at our feet is a crystal carpet flashing with violet, indigo, green, and red, but far below the frosted lowlands are merely white and upon them each isolated chestnut or elm stands up with startling distinctness, glistening, translucent, like a fountain strangely crystallized. Beyond the lowlands, the nearer mountains are a soft, feathery gray, save where the sun catches their summits and lays upon them a glittering corona. Beyond them, in turn, are the far ranges of the next valley, blue no longer, but a pale, soft, smoky, shadow tint, and looking liquid as water, looking, indeed, like waves heaving along the horizon. Once in the winter the world is like this to remind us, per-

haps, that the universe we customarily know is but one of a thousand possible universes, after all, and far from the most marvellous.

Bolton Coit Brown has studied the delicate landscape values in the drifting snowstorm. We can see his pictures reproduced on the scale of nature from our garden. Suppose we let (1) represent the darkest spot on the picture, our gaunt grape trellis in the foreground, for instance. Then (2) will represent the nearer trees in the orchard just beyond; (3) the farther trees and a pine across the brook; (4) will represent the ethereal, half-shrouded trees about our neighbor's house up the slope, and the glimpse of the gable and chimney. Beyond that, there is nothing but the living whiteness of the storm. We have a picture in five delicate values only; a picture where nearly everything is eliminated but the grape arbor, the ghostly arms of the orchard trees, and the hint of a house. Yet how beautiful the picture is, how suggestive, thus reduced to its lowest terms! It is Japanese in its decorative simplicity. One day, I recall, a wheelbarrow had been left out, with a load of dead apple boughs

upon it, and served instead of the grape arbor as the darkest point of the picture. It was curiously transformed into a thing of beauty, and as the white snow drifted into a heap upon it, softening its outlines, it appeared to grow larger, to compose the picture about itself. I left it there till the storm began to clear, other values emerged, and finally the top of a mountain jumped into view and reduced the barrow to humbleness and its proper scale once more.

There come country days in March, the truthful recorder must admit, when even the run of sap from the maples and the smell of it boiling in the sugar house cannot quite drive out a disgust for muddy roads and melting snow, and a desire for the feel under foot of paved walks, for the bustle of cities, the scent and sound of the opera. A fresh snow flurry inspires the same resentment as a clumsy person who does not know how to make his exit from a room. One waits for spring with the same uneasy feeling, the sense of wasted time, that one waits for a delayed train, or for the conductor to come for the fares. But on a magic March morning one

suddenly awakes an hour before his custom and hears from the garden, not the pleasant call of the chickadees, familiar all winter, but a new, full-throated, liquid song bursting out of every evergreen and bush. The morning sun is streaming through the window square. The cover-lid feels heavy and hot. You climb from bed and hurry out into the garden. Before you, at every step, rise from the ground and flutter a little way ahead, instantly to resume their amazingly rapid, twin-footed dabs for a breakfast, the brownish-red bodies of innumerable fox-sparrows. A robin sings in the apple-tree. Wait a day or two and you will see, among the red fox-sparrows, the white-tail feathers of a vesper, and hear his lovely song at twilight. Winter is over, spring is on the way. Your longing for opera vanishes like a mist. You have a sweeter vesper song; a hundred feathered Carusos are in every hedge.

Before I sat down to write this morning, Joe called me out to talk seeds. He has the hot-beds uncovered and the dressing in. Where shall we put the sweet-peas? and the melons? How many pounds of fertilizer shall we need for

the potatoes? Will the Golden Bantam cross-fertilize with the Country Gentleman if we plant them together at the usual end of the garden for corn? A thousand important questions arise. We walked in the garden to settle them, the sparrows and robins hopping and fluttering before us, the air warm and sunny, the hedges musical. Yet dabs of snow still lay in sheltered corners, and lifting our eyes to High Pasture we could see great patches of it white on the mountain. As Joe plunged his fork into the dark loam of the hot-bed, I made a snowball and tossed it toward a robin.

“Joe,” said I, “spring won’t really be here till I can find a blade of grass big enough to blow.”

“Sure, it ’s here,” he answered. “Oi seen the boys playin’ marbles this mornin’.”

Marbles! Marbles are not a game, except on the pavements of a city. They are a votive offering to spring and dry sidewalks, a celebration of the departure of the frost from the ground. The frost in our town usually departs first from the walk along the stone wall in front of the Episcopal Church, and it is there, almost under the

shadow of the cross, that the boys celebrate their pagan, innocent Easter. If Joe saw them at it this morning, I am willing to accept the sign, and bid winter farewell.

The slush of another snowball crumbled and melted in my hand. The climbing sun grew warmer and warmer on my neck. I looked back toward the house, where my study door stood open, the portal of duty, and sighed. I looked the other way, toward the mountain, and the scent of arbutus came to me with almost physical distinctness. Thus easily do we lay off the love of one season for the love of the next, and slip from an old pleasure to a new without regrets.

But, after all, is it not a pharisaical pleasure, this of the wind and weather, the sky and grass? Why should one write about them as if they were of profound importance? Few of us are Wordsworthians by belief. We feel depressed or gay according to the state of the weather, to be sure; but we are no less affected by the state of our stomachs or our bank accounts, and quite as many of us, surely, make a religion of our bellies or our bank accounts, as of nature! Why should

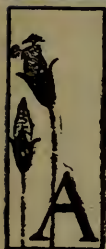
I feel this superiority to my city brother, which I undoubtedly do feel, because I happen to have a garden full of sunshine, fox-sparrows, and swelling apple buds, while he has only the shop-windows on the Avenue and the smell of asphalt to tell him winter has departed and spring is on the flood? Beside his warm steam radiator last winter he certainly felt no envy of me because in my ring of purple hills the chill landscape was exquisite with minor chords. Perhaps he feels no envy of me now, save for a few days while his spring fever lasts.

Yet I am Pharisee enough to pity him. With or without philosophy, the wind and weather, the sky and grass, lay their spell upon me, bidding me be near to them, responsive to their mood, and whispering to my spirit that their companionship is more to be desired than many riches, yea even than many friends. Since this message reaches me through my senses, I fear I am but a poor descendant of the Puritans, though I live in the land of Jonathan Edwards and pass his monument every day.



XIII

ROADSIDE GARDENS



MOTOR pulled up at the cross-roads this morning evidently waiting until my dog and I reached the spot. Three goggled fat women sat on the rear seat. A goggled fat man and a goggled chauffeur sat on the front. All five were covered with dust. The goggled fat man had a map spread out on his fat knee. "Pardon me," he said, running his fat finger over this map, "but can you direct us to Great Barrington? We can't quite make out the road."

I gave them the directions, and the chauffeur backed the car halfway around, cut out his muffler, and sent the machine with a leap and

an explosion like a battery of Gatling guns tearing down the road. It disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Barney," said I to my dog, "they are seeing the Berkshires."

Barney looked up, wagging his tail, and then set off into the field on a woodchuck scent. I continued my plod up the side road till presently I reached the Berkshire garden which I sought, and the perfect view of Monument Mountain. There were no motor tracks in the road here, since it leads only to a little pond and a farm or two, ending against the wooded hill. It was a clear autumn morning, crisp without chill, and fragrant as new cider. Already the pageant of the season was being staged over hill-slope and swamp. The red banners of October were flying in the woods, and with every gust of wind a little battalion of dead leaves roused into life in the road at my feet and rushed forward as upon some foe.

The spot where I paused was on a slight elevation of pasture land, commanding a wide prospect. The road was bounded by low stone walls,



There were no motor tracks in the road here, since it leads only to a little pond and a farm or two, ending against the wooded hill

gray and half hidden with careless briars. A few hundred rods ahead, where the road dipped through a tamarack swamp, lay a little pond reflecting now the autumn foliage on its banks like colors laid on a palette of black glass. To the right, across the fields, a mouse-gray farmhouse nestled in an orchard, two piles of bright red apples under the trees adding a rich and cheerful note. Immediately at my feet on either side of the brown carpet of fallen leaves and extending to the gray stone walls, were two delicate and exquisite garden beds, sown with the careless symmetry of nature. They held little blue asters, sometimes called iron weed asters; just that and no more, save a few feathery tufts of dead grass between the clusters of blooms. These little asters, which flower after the frost, hold a faintly faded blue of summer in their tiny petals and spread a bit of sky along our New England roadsides more satisfying and suggestive to me than any formal border on the grandest estate.

Just behind the stone wall to the left of my roadside garden rose a single white pine, bifurcated near the ground as pines so often are when

they stand alone, and extending wide lateral branches. One of these branches hung over the wall like the binding line of a Japanese design, and beneath it, two miles distant across a corn-field and the green-spired expanse of a young hemlock wood, rose the solid battlement of Monument Mountain, proud with its banners of autumn, perfectly framed by the pine above and the wild garden of roadside asters below. The corn was stacked in the foreground field and orange pumpkins glowed against the brown soil. The odor of autumn was in the air, the smell of fallen leaves and garnered corn. I put my pipe in my pocket and sat down on the wall.

Presumably, by the time I had looked and sniffed my fill, my fat friends in their motor, who were "seeing the Berkshires," had passed under the crags of Monument, where the cotton mills huddle, and were tearing along beside the trolley track on their way to Great Barrington and lunch. It was little enough of the true Berkshires they had seen, or ever would see — the true charm of our hills and valleys lying in these lovely pictures which everywhere abound, under the limb of a

pine, down the vista of a country road, between the shaggy trunks of the sugar maples, or across green meadows to the silvery willows and the winding river—pictures which are only to be had, however, for a little searching and experiment, and savored at leisure and in quiet. Of the roadside gardens they could know less than nothing, for these fairest jewels of old New England lie too close under their rushing wheels, and demand beside for their savoring a certain meekness and delicacy of spirit, a childlike content to roam slowly in small spaces and find beauty and happiness in the common things of the wayside. One of the greatest of American artists, and one of the gentlest and sweetest of men, has planted the roadside before his house with goldenrod, though formal terraces and marble gates and all exotic blooms were at his command. I like to read a symbol of his greatness in those careless drifts of gold, and in the sturdy apple-trees which stand beyond them up the slope to his spacious dwelling.

Indeed, there is many a symbol to be found, and many a lesson read, in our American roadside gardens, alike for the elevation of our spirit

and the improvement of our garden craft. One of the quaintest of misconceptions in our gardening is the too frequent attempt to reproduce a Japanese effect on an estate in Long Island or Westchester or New England. The first principle of Japanese gardening, underlying even its religious formalism, is the principle of landscape reproduction. The Japanese garden, though it be made in a pie plate, must reproduce a native landscape of Japan. The Japanese art of dwarfing trees, of course, is an outcome of necessity, to maintain the proportions of nature. Such flowers, even, as are found in the Japanese garden are there not for their own sakes but because they belong to the landscape. The true Japanese garden in America, then, would contain no pergolas and moon bridges and stone lanterns and wistaria. It would much more properly contain a bit of old road winding between gray walls fringed with clematis and asters into the shadow of the pines or the emerald shimmer of the birch woods. Over its water feature would hang the purple of wild grapes; and water lilies, not lotos, would nod on the ripples. The "tea house"

would be a square, mouse-gray dwelling, reproduced to scale, with great central chimney and lean-to roof behind, the type which all of us associate with our fairest and most characteristic country landscapes. Against the weathered clapboards of this house the hollyhocks would nod, and in spring its gray would be exquisite amid the bursting pink of the orchard.

Such would be the true Japanese garden in America. Does one exist? Our architects, at the instigation of our "captains of industry," go gleefully forth and crown a New England hilltop with an Italian villa, planting Lombardy poplars where oak and pine and maple grew, to say nothing of the stately elm. They go into a tract of woods, hew out an opening, and erect a French Renaissance chateau of imported marble, with bay trees on the terraces, lotos in the fountain pool, and rare, exotic blooms in a thousand formal beds where marble statues stand and seem ashamed of their nakedness. To me, at least, such estates and gardens are the Twentieth Century equivalent of the French-roofed houses with a tower at one corner and great lawns sloping up

broken by a huge ugly bed of canna and an iron deer, which were the acme of taste in our mid-Victorian era. Our estates cost more now, and we copy better models. We have substituted Donatello for the iron deer. But we are little nearer either an architecture or a garden craft of our own. Especially in our gardens, the New England back road still shames us in its artless use of native materials and the simplicity and grace of its effects. The old New England farmhouse against a backing of orchard, pine and wooded hills, seen up an undulating road bordered with pink and gold and azure blue, still puts to shame our modern country villas amid their pseudo-Italian or French or Japanese gardens — sometimes all three together, with a dash of Tudor-English thrown in. Because it is indigenuous to its site and soil, it has the ultimate quality of spontaneity, and hence it is seemly and beautiful. As once we were in our literature, so we are still in our gardening — too often mere parrots. A true Japanese garden is the concentrated delicacy and fragrance of the landscape of Japan. How many American gardens catch and com-

pose in little the charm and freshness of our native landscape? Do we think, when we enter our gardens, of nature and the peace of nature, and its pictorial magic? Or do we think of a florist's catalogue and a photograph of Italy? For me, I prefer a certain cross-road triangle of wild sunflowers and thistles to your formal beds of phlox that lead to a Grecian pergola behind a Tudor sundial, flanked by a Japanese pool and an Italian Renaissance stone bench.

One of the roads winds down the hill to Tyringham, through ranks of giant sugar maples that on the dullest day of autumn seem to hold the imprisoned sunlight in their golden depths, and in midsummer frame between their shaggy trunks the level meadows far below, the roofs of the village, and the distant hills beyond. When you come to the cross-road, your ear catches the tinkle of a brook, and your dog, sniffing water, disappears into the bushes, whence you hear his greedy lapping. The spot is warm and sunny, the sound of water refreshing. In the untrimmed delta, so common where country roads intersect, the wild sunflowers grow shoulder high, and

among them, forcing their heads up level with the golden blooms, hundreds of pink thistles add their delicate but daring color. Over this bank of pink and gold hovers in midsummer a shimmer of brown, rising as you draw near — a cloud of tiny butterflies; and in it incessantly, warm as the sun itself, stirs and hums the business of the bees. There are few passers on this Berkshire byway. The valley town lies far below, reached by other roads less steep. The gorgeous garden spreads its colors for the bees and butterflies and for an occasional farmer on his way to market. It asks no care of any one, no trimming of the edges nor thinning of the roots. It is just a jewel set in the landscape by a better Architect than we, on the sleepy road to Tyringham.

Such gardens, with as limitless a variety and succession of wild blooms as any garden annual can compile for you, are still common on our American back roads. They used to be common everywhere, before the invasion of lumbermen, telegraph and telephone poles, stone crushers and other servants of utility. They might be common still for a little love and care. The wanton de-

struction of timber on the borders of our public roads, once universal, is yielding slowly to a more enlightened sentiment. But there is no more reason why the wild flowers on the untimbered borders should be mercilessly mowed down, and the roadsides reduced to ugly stubble. One prays sometimes for a Senhouse in every American county, to re-sow our highways with their natural wild loveliness, to weave our roads into the landscape with a binding chord of color, to show us in time, perhaps, how we might, out of native materials, achieve a garden craft of our own. So far as we know, this is an opportunity the village improvement societies have not yet grasped. Their activities mostly cease where the houses of the town cease and the true landscape begins.

What formal drive on the most elaborate of estates can match for beauty the bend of the country road into the dark shadows of the hemlocks, where the banks are lush with moss, and on this richest green velvet the scarlet bunchberries glow? Perhaps, too, a tiny thread of water runs by the road, fringed with gentians. The road is unparched and cool, the green moss

cool, the color rich but sparing, the shadowing trees stately and quiet as a church. You will go far amid the gardens made by man, to match it. Nor will you easily match so humble a garden as a field of that stubborn shrubby-cinquoil some New Englanders wrongly call "hardhack," when on a neglected slope it spreads its yellow blooms from the roadside to the border of the forest or the green bulwark of a mountain. Pure gold it is amid the pasture rocks, and cow paths wind between the clumps with a quaint suggestion of a map of Boston. And can you better that shrubby effect where the laurel is massed against the trees, and the road bends around it as if in deference to its charm?

Few of my readers, probably, have been in Mount Washington Township in the southwest corner of Massachusetts, an upland plateau behind Mount Everett. The post-office is the top of a desk in a boarding house, and boasts nine boxes. Mount Washington Township is not densely populated. But it has in prodigal profusion what many a gardener would perjure his soul to possess — established clumps of mountain

laurel, eight and ten feet high and sometimes forty feet in circumference, lining every roadside, lifting proudly over every gray stone wall, and stretching up the pastures into the mountain forest till the hill-slopes fairly riot with their wealth of pink. Mountain laurel has been occasionally transplanted with success; but usually the most careful attempts to domesticate it fail. It demands to be let alone, amid its pasture rocks and briars, the self-sufficient aristocrat of our native landscape. Some of us love it the better for this, and make annual pilgrimage to the gardens where it grows, nor find its loveliness less because it flames by gray stone walls and over rocks and briars instead of beside formal paths and upon clipped lawns; and because beyond it we see not an Italian garden and the stone portals of a French chateau, but only green rows of corn, perhaps, and a mouse-gray barn and then the doming ridge of the Taconic Hills. We like to think that laurel is one of those things money cannot buy. We cannot have a formal garden with a marble sundial and lotos flowers on the pool. But, for a ten-cent fare on the trolley to South

Egremont and a five-mile walk past a perpetual roadside garden and a dancing brook, we can achieve such pink glory as no nursery-man ever rivalled, where the only gardeners are the cows.

The Japanese scorn roses as too "obvious," though they cultivate, somewhat paradoxically it seems to us, the peony. There is something a little showy about roses, however, something suggestive of feminine vanity and expense, especially when they are cultivated in formal beds and forced for large and odorous blooms. But the climbing rambler would be a sorry loss as an aid to architectural picturesqueness, and against the American wild rose, surely, no Japanese could cavil, for in its manner of growth, its delicacy and its harmony with the landscape, it is almost the most Japanese of all our flowers. It opens its heart by the wayside when the world is growing lush with green, and beside old fences hung with clematis or gray walls where the blueberries are coming to fruit, it masses its pink blooms, each one delicate and perfect but all together making a rich note of color against the

virgin green and white of little birches and the golden summer fields. How carelessly massed the wild roses grow, yet how they seem to fall into skilfully calculated beds. They add warmth to the June day, and they add a delicate wistfulness, too, by their individual quality of petal and feminine poise, even as MacDowell has caught them in his music. To one who loves nature (oh, perilous phrase!), and flowers as a part of nature, of the landscape, of the pictorial loveliness of the world, the wild rose garden by the wayside has a charm and beauty no collection of her showier sisters behind a yew hedge, bounded by formal paths, can hope to match.

The more striking of roadside shrubbery planting, such as the clumped sumac, rich in autumn with its red leaves and deep, luscious red bloom spikes, has been frequently copied by gardeners, employing the same material. The fragrant trailing clematis, too, running wild over wall and fence, runs no less readily to rule, though seldom in the formal garden has it the same charm in winter, when, by the wayside wall, the white

relics of its blossoms are borne on delicate sprays against the snowy mystery of buried fields and shrouded hemlocks. We prize the flowers of spring, as well, and save a corner of our garden to hold the trilliums, the bluets, the anemones, the violets, the columbines, which grow so carelessly just out of the wheel ruts on the borders of country roads, as if they had come down from the woods and fields to speak the passer-by of May. Yet even with our most careful art we can hardly rival the white snowfall of hepaticas under leafless trees nor catch the careless grace of a columbine swaying its red bells on a ledge of rock above the bend of the road, a ledge where the violets climb up from the ferns and the shy anemones lurk in the grass. Nor shall our garden hold that vista round the curve, of wood and field and purple hills.

Of the humbler flowers, the roadside weeds, few are the praises sung, though Thoreau did say of mullein that it is "so conspicuous with its architectural spire, the prototype of candelabrams." But one expects the praise of humble weeds from Thoreau. There are among the li-

brary poets no sonnets to hardhack or orange milkweed, no odes to toad-flax, no lyrics to celebrate hemp weed or bed straw. Yet each in its season praises its Maker with bloom and color along our northern roads, and adds to artless gardens the charm of its petals and fragrance. What the farmer knows as wild carrot bears a dainty, flat-topped white bloom sometimes as large as a saucer, and a long bed of them will often appear like a strip of delicate embroidery along the wayside, making their more aristocratic title of Queen Anne's lace entirely applicable. In winter, too, they are still beautiful, for the blooms curl up on the tall, dry stalks and hold, after a storm, each its little cup of snow. Indeed, there is seldom the stark desolation of the formal garden in winter about the roadside garden. There is, primarily, always the line of the road and the white, encompassing, free landscape. Then there are, beside the cups of the wild carrots, the glowing berries of the bitter-sweet, a red limb of them hung athwart the snowy world as if New England were intent to show that it, too, can produce a Japanese screen;

the lavender stalks of blackberry vines; the tawny stems of the willows. In autumn asters bloom when the frost has killed the last of the flowers in the formal garden, and when all the leaves are gone there is still the belated blossom of the witch hazel, shining like thin gold where, a burning bush, it crests a bank against the western sun.

"The housewives of Nature," said Thoreau, "wish to see the rooms properly cleaned and swept before the upholsterer comes and nails down his carpet of snow. The swamp burns along its margin with the scarlet berries of the black alder, or prinos; the leaves of the pitcher plant (which old Josselyn called Hollow-leaved Lavender) abound, and are of many colors from plain green to a rich striped yellow, or deep red."

It is just here, where the road crosses a swamp and is raised a little above the surrounding level, that one sees his roadside garden stretching off and merging completely with the landscape. Above tall grasses the taller stalks of the cat-o'-nine-tails lift their brown fingers; the irises gem

the sedge, scattered like stars, not lined in formal rows as in a man-made garden; the brownish-red pitcher plants in bloom glimmer dully; or over against the woods the sticky wild azalea, or meadow pink, masses its color and sends out all the long June day its incomparable perfume. Perhaps a dark swamp pool is pricked with water lilies, and tall brake or modest maiden-hair fringes the slope at your feet. Such, in one season or another, is the roadside swamp, a garden wandering with the leisure of still water courses away into the woods or fields, as much a permanence of the landscape as the sky above your head or the far horizon line.

Did you ever notice a country boy on the face of the fields? He goes about his business curiously a part of nature, it may be industriously gathering nuts under a brown hickory, or a tiny figure disappearing over a pasture ridge or crossing a square of stubble surrounded to the knees by a swarm of startled grasshoppers. He fits into the landscape like a squirrel or a bird. So the little orange and gold blooms of the paintbrush in the grass by the wayside, or the Cana-

dian lilies looking up over a wall, or the banks of goldenrod and asters laying their splendid colors with the curve of the road mile on mile, have no blight of artifice upon them, but, though seen, are yet unseen, are rather felt as a part of the peace and loveliness of nature. They do not assault you with their showiness, they and their sisters, nor cry of their clever arrangement nor whisper excitedly to the breeze that the house up the path cost two hundred thousand dollars. They are humble weeds at best, wind-sown, bird-scattered, bound into a wild garland only by the ribbon of the road. They are fairest on neglected byways, and for him who still tramps the byways they are garden enough. What need hath he of vast estates whose ways lie where the mountain laurel climbs the hills or the purple of flowering raspberry and the tiny jewels of gold-thread are the foreground for a vista of falling brook and emerald vale to the blue dome of the Taconics? What gardened estate shall ever satisfy him, indeed, that does not hold something of the simplicity and wild grace and pictorial naturalness of this rural

America, of this landscape which shall always be to him as the thought of home?

It was an old road out of Concord that Thoreau hymned, in one of his lyric passages: "The May weed looks up in my face there, the pale lobelia and the Canada snapdragon; a little hardhack and meadow-sweet peep over the fence; nothing more serious to obstruct the view, and thimble berries are the food of thought (before the drought), along by the walls. A road that passes over the height-of-land, between earth and heaven, separating those streams which flow earthward from those which flow heavenward."

He did not scorn the flowers, intent on this high rhapsody. To him they were lovely and of good report. He only asked that they should not shut out his transcendental view. Even in more earth-bound mood we may well ask of gardens that they do not shut out our view of nature, and even though they be but a screen against our neighbor's clothes-yard that they seem less a horticultural display than a bit of spontaneous growth from the soil wherein they stand. The larger our gardens are planned, the more feasible

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it becomes to make them truly spontaneous and reproductive of the landscape, or a part and parcel with it. Toward that achievement many an old New England roadside still points the way.



XIV NIGHT

TWO small boys and a dog were hurrying along through the woods in the early spring twilight. The ice was out of the streams and the sap was running, but there were no leaves yet, only a haze of frail green like the ghost of a veil when you looked over the trees into the sun. Under the hemlocks, however, it was as shadowed as in June, and with the coming of night the trail was almost indistinguishable. The dog smelled it out. The small boys found it by the feel of their feet and by looking up and following the thread of open sky. They kept ever closer together and spoke little. It was very dark and

terrifying among those great hemlocks. The wind sighed eternally, like a human, overhead. Things unknown pattered off through the undergrowth. The boys unconsciously broke into a dog-trot.

Then suddenly ahead they saw the light of the clearing, beyond the swamp. The trail grew faintly visible, like a gray ribbon. It crossed the swamp brook on a bridge and wound off through the fringe of hard timber and over the ridge toward home. The water in the swamp glistened like quicksilver. It seemed to hold more of the departed day than the sky itself, which was fast fading into night. Out of the quicksilver the swamp maples and saplings reared almost indistinguishable trunks to the horizon line. Above that they told against the pale sky as a black tracery of intricate delicacy and beauty. And in the swamp the Pickering frogs were singing shrilly — *phee, phee, phee* — far up above the limits of the human voice. Their cheerful spring song and the kindly presence of the clearing brought the little boys down to a walk again. They looked back into the now impenetrable



Night

gloom of the hemlocks, then forward at the lovely black tracery of twigs against the west, and the sweet influences of night brooded over them as they went silently homeward.

It was many years later that one of those boys read Shelley's

“Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of night . . .”

and interpreted it, as we all must interpret poetry and art and music, in terms of his own experience. It was only when he reached this period of Shelley and self-consciousness that he realized how rich his experience had been, thanks to a country boyhood, in those sights and sounds of nature, when she stands intimate and revealed, which are the backgrounds of poetry and perhaps the most precious possessions of memory for the reader. If the mind and spirit are to give to art an immediate and kindled response, they must possess a wealth of coördinate details, the seed of suggestion must not fall on barren soil. There is, I fancy, a very real difference in the nature and strength of his response even to such

a poem, say, as Arnold's "Scholar Gypsy," between the reader who has known shy nature intimately in all its moods and the reader born and reared exclusively in such a city as New York.

" But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanchèd
green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!"

That phrase, "the strips of moon-blanchèd green," has a peculiar magic for the reader whose memory holds similar pictures, who as a boy perhaps stole furtively out at night over the pastures and viewed with something akin to awe the giant oak that guarded the first glade of the forest. There it stood bathed dimly in the moonlight, gigantic, strange, unknown. Night and the moon had transfigured it, as they had transfigured the forest beyond and the open valley behind. What terrors did those dark woods not hold, even for the brave boy of twelve? And what fairy shapes, too, might not glide into the moon-blanchèd open,

even the white nymphs one had read about? And behind, how deep the valley lay, how far it stretched to the dim, silvered hills beyond! In all the world there was not a sound save the night whisperings of the leaves, the sleepy chorus of the crickets, and the sad call of a whip-poor-will. The world of day, the people and the cattle and the bright, friendly light, slept as if they would never wake. On your feet the dew was cold, and on your heart lay the wonder and the mystery of night. It was one of those moments when God trains His little children to be poets — or, at any rate, future readers of poetry!

And how much of such training is done by night! In our stupid, unimaginative, grown-up way, we write silly little verses about the child's terror of the dark, or draw silly little pictures of it, regarding it as a mild and amiable joke. Yet the child's terror of the dark is often the result of a finer flight of imagination than any we grown-ups indulge, and night for the child holds deep, primeval mysticism and poetry. We admire Blanco White's sonnet to night; yet it is essentially a child's conception to find the dark-

ness in the light, to see in imagination the earth ball spin, from the shadowed side. Most of our literature about the child, just now so popular, is essentially false because it is too superficial. The shades of the prison-house have obliterated our finer recollection. And in nothing is this so pronounced as in our forgetfulness of the child's feeling for night, his unconsciously imaginative life between sunset and dawn.

When I was a little boy, night in the mountains was for me a perpetual joy and terror, nor has it yet lost the joy nor quite all the terror. A level wall of nearby mountains just before the moon heaves up behind them and their summits are shivered with a mysterious light while the slopes are black, utter shadow, still seems to me a mighty, unbelievable wave bearing down upon me, and to this day if I am alone, far from a house, I have a sinking sensation of terror, and can with difficulty refrain from running away, as I did when a child. Professor James might tell me that sinking sensation is a physical memory of the childish experience, and induces the mood of terror. He says we are often frightened

because we run away, not the reverse. But I prefer to believe otherwise; I prefer to believe that I can still, under cover of the night, see things as they are not!

I know at any rate that I can still stand on a hill, where a black cedar cuts the sky, and feel the earth swing eastward under the stars. Always as a child I tried to realize that the earth was a ball spinning on its axis and hurtling through space, but my mind could never quite grasp the illusive picture. Then one night I stood upon a hilltop and felt the eastward spin. It all came clear in a flash of revelation. That first night, too, the stars were not in the sky; they were lamps let down on invisible wires till they hung just over the trees. You may see them that way any winter night in Florida, but not often in the North. I watched till I almost fancied they swayed in the wind. Gradually they were drawn up an infinite distance, and I felt the earth travel beneath them. I lay on my back to obliterate everything but the sky and the top of the cedar. I felt the eastward spin even more clearly then. Rising, I looked down at the valley lamps.

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Behind one of those window squares the grown-ups were playing cards. I thought them very silly, as I stood up there with my stars, riding the earth ball through space and night. I was the adult, the poet, the philosopher. They were just playing games. And yet we patronize the child!

It was at our mountain house that I used to lie in bed at night and watch the men go out to the stable with lanterns. Their great shadows danced fantastically on the barn wall and up over the roof, the legs getting hopelessly crossed and tangled. These grotesque pantomime performances were an endless delight. One night I saw a lantern bobbing up in the orchard, and got up myself to investigate. As I entered the orchard the light was resting on the ground, and showed me in the midst of the inky dark the vague outlines of a clothes-basket, and some flapping sheets on a line. Mrs. Sheldon was taking down the wash. "Why?" I asked her.

"Because it's going to rain," she answered. "The mountain is talking."

She was a thin, wiry woman, of few words,

who could smell rain a day off, and make excellent cookies. I went out of the circle of lantern-light and looked up toward Kinsman. His great, shaggy sides were faintly visible, looming preternaturally high, a blacker patch against the black sky and the dim stars. The air was quite still. There was no wind. I listened intently, and presently my ear caught a sound like the steady roar of a far-off waterfall. It was the wind rushing through the forests far up on those shaggy slopes. The mountain was holding converse with the gale. Down here there was no wind. Far aloft the gale was hurrying. It gave me a tremendous sensation of space and height. I fancied myself alone up there clinging to a dizzy ledge, while the gale howled about me; and I grew faint with my imagined terror. But I felt, too, a curious new friendship for the mountain, as for a human thing which could communicate news of the weather and bid us, on a perfectly calm night, take in the clothes. I went to bed with entire confidence that I should wake up to find the mountains buried in cloud and the brooks roaring. And it was even so. My evident increased

admiration for Mrs. Sheldon, too, brought a fresh batch of cookies. I was a gainer all around!

“’T is midnight: on the mountains brown
The pale round moon shines deeply down.”

So sang Byron. And in college a passage in our rhetoric (was it not quoted from Ruskin?) pointed out that the poetry of this couplet resides in the adverb “deeply.” I remember my efforts to explain to my room-mate *why*. It was so perfectly apparent to me, who even as a child had seen our mountain intervale deepen and grow luminously mysterious beneath the magic of the moon, and the cleft on Cannon become a bottomless pit. His environment had been less kind to him; perhaps, too, his mind was less naturally pictorial. If I tried to explain poetry to him, he had an even harder time trying to explain mathematics to me. But I feel sure that the poverty of his memory in coördinating details, so essential to the visualization of poetry, was in no small measure due to his urban childhood. He had never been turned loose on the edge of the wilderness, never pushed adventurous footsteps into

the mystery of the mountain night or brushed the moonlit dew from the clearing.

Moonlight! How its soft, obliterating glory re-makes the world, and re-makes it "nearer to the heart's desire"! George Moore called the songs of Schubert and Schumann "the moonlit lakes and nightingales of music". Moonlight is the illumination of Romance. There is something lyric and lovely about it, something akin to the magic of the last act of "The Merchant of Venice," which is saturated with moonlight. Quaintly, too, the moon, symbol of the chaste goddess, is in reality the patroness of the mating passion. But the child as yet feels nothing of that. For him moonlight on familiar fields is but the revelation of a strange, mysterious, exquisite half-world concealed somehow in the glare of day, and made manifest once a month for his wonder and delight, when, like the good king in the carol, he looks out of the window after tea,

And the snow lies round about,
Deep and crisp and even.

It is a different world that he sees, blue and dimly suffused with misty gold. The fence rails are

reproduced on the snow as they climb over the ridge, and long shadows creep out from the trees and bushes, like spirits. As the snowy world rolls into distance, it grows dimmer, more mysterious. It is very cold. Perhaps the child slips out-of-doors and stands on the snow crust, which squeaks faintly under his boots. There is no other sound. Silently, coldly, beautifully, the misty golden moonlight at once floods and obliterates his universe. He has a strange sensation of unreality, of unreality that would yet be very sweet could it be real. Is this not, after all, the essence of Romanticism?

Once, in our same mountain home, we drove down the Landaff valley to see the moon rise. Over the ridge of Kinsman fancy could detect a lighter space in the dark sky, but that was all for several miles. The road ahead was almost invisible, the horse a bobbing blur. Presently the light behind the mountain became more definite. The last slope was outlined behind a golden halo. Then the road plunged down between high, wooded banks into utter darkness, and we emerged, suddenly, abruptly, beyond the last

ridge of the mountain, into brilliant moonlight. The harness glittered, long shadows stretched westward, distances became luminous and distinct, everything was bright and clear-cut as by a sudden flood of artificial light. And there at the left, just across the meadow in a gap of low hills, only a few hundred yards away, hung the full moon.

“We could get out and touch it!” I cried.

My father smiled, but he did not laugh at me. He was a wise man, and never laughed at children. “If it does n’t hurry, it will get caught in the tree-tops,” he said.

But it escaped their entanglement, and rode higher and higher behind us all the way home, making a quiet splendor of the night.

Could the little boy who carried this picture treasured vividly in his memory thereafter meet the word “moonlight” without an instant association? Is it sensible to suppose that such scenes and experiences in childhood do not color and enrich the whole future of the man? Our enjoyment of most things in this world depends largely upon our private stock of associated ideas, upon

the extent, as it were, to which the new stimulus can find friends in our brain. Our enjoyment of art in all its forms depends tremendously upon the images of beauty in our memories, by which we test, compare and appreciate. Keats's

“ The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores. . .”

is sheer magic only to the imagination which can project itself at the stately call of the verse into the void and see the earth ball rolling under from the sun while the starlight glooms its many waters, or which can survey, as from a great cliff, the dark plain of the sea and the curl of foam along a dim shore, stretching endlessly into the night. To answer the call of Keats, the imagination must have its materials of memory to work with, and only nature can have supplied them. No one, I fancy, who has not stood at night high above the seashore will ever know the full magic of this immortal couplet. No one, too, whose memory does not hold a picture of that infinite curve of the sea rim, who has not brooded upon the last red topsail sinking “below the

verge," will ever know the full magic of Shakespeare's

"On such a night
Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage."

The sensitive child that is permitted at all hours and all seasons to wander by sea margin and forest, over fields and under the moon, is laying by treasures that are not made with hands. The cruelty of keeping a child in the city is not alone a matter of his bodily health. And it is especially at night, when the daylight pastimes are put aside and the child walks hand in hand with mystery, that his little soul is touched, his dawning memory stocked with immortal recollections.

There comes a later period of life when night has a peculiar charm, because in some subtle way it seems to shut the youth into a great, sweet chamber of darkness, alone with his beloved. She may be far away, but thoughts of her bridge the sleeping world. He may leave her side, but her presence walks with him and he fears no prying eyes. Night is sacred to lovers no less

than to thieves. Shall you, as long as you live, forget the *warm chill* of that dark pond across which you nightly paddled, while a guiding light was set in a window behind you? Sometimes the pond was ghostly with a white mist steaming up into the starlight, and your body was enveloped while your head rose above the vapor. Now and then a fish jumped unexpectedly, with a flash of silver and a loud splash. Though it seemed light on the pond, and you had the lamp behind for beacon, the farther shore, under the woods, was utter black, and you made your landing by some primitive instinct, gliding under the shadow of the trees where the prow of your own canoe was invisible, and hearing at the expected moment the friendly grate of gravel under the keel. On the shore a path glimmered dimly, and fireflies glinted in the grass. The frogs were singing. Five miles away you heard the faint whistle of a locomotive. You yourself whistled one long-drawn note which went out over the water, and the lamp twinkling in the distant window disappeared and appeared again, three times. It was essential, you remember, that you prove you had n't been

drowned! Then you felt your way home through the dark pines, which were warm, like a chamber; felt your way unerringly, for in the night old powers wake, dulled by long disuse, so accustomed are we to depend almost exclusively on sight. We do not know till there is need to walk in the darkness, for instance, that the soles of our feet have senses.

Again it was night when white arms released you, reluctant to be released, and you crossed the cropped lawn which bespoke a more urban neighborhood, and passed through deserted streets and down a short cut over the railroad tracks by the roundhouse. The last train from the city had come in, the trainmen departed. That shocking confession you will have to make! But the locomotives had a little steam up, and were gently panting as though in sleep, waiting for morning. There were cracks of light about the doors of their fire-boxes. They were warm, almost human, and often you paused beside one, patting its iron flanks, as if you greeted a comrade of the night. A little farther on, your way took you past a cemetery, which by long familiarity held

no depression. But once, very late, after the white arms had released you with tears for the terror that hot love has of its own too possible brevity, you saw the moon set behind that cemetery ridge — and you will never forget it.

There is no twilight of the moon. As it catches in the trees before setting, a pallor comes over the landscape. Then the moon is seen visibly to plunge down out of sight, as you may see the long hand on a great clock jump the minutes. All the light shivers off the world, and instantly the body seems to feel a chill and the spirit a strange depression. At that moment when the moon vanished behind the desolate graveyard ridge, you knew a despair such as you pray you may never know again. The reaction from a perhaps too romantic passion was violent and abrupt. You felt “chilly and grown old.” You knew you should never love in the future with the old, ardent heart of youth. That was forever behind you! What a pity, too, your poor heart held for itself! Could there be any morning for this black world? Almost you hoped that there was not. And in this new, utter dark of the spirit

you found a strange new thrill. Ah, happy youth — too happy, happy youth — it is not till later that the moon sets for our ardent passions and our hearts of hot Romance! And generally we are abed, soundly sleeping, and do not know that anything at all has happened.

The beauty and charm of the outdoor stage (which is slowly gaining favor in America) are immeasurably enhanced by night. Under the kindly cover of the dark, obliterating fences, telegraph poles and the neighbor's house, almost any garden grove may become a Forest of Arden or Titania's abode. Effects of illusion are possible which are unknown to the stage of sharp wing-pieces and definite proscenium. I once saw a performance of "The Old Wives' Tale" in the orchard back of the Radcliffe College dormitory, where the calcium illuminated a spot between two apple-trees, and the characters came and went by a process of drifting into the light or melting back into the dark. At first we heard the lost shepherds hallooing in the distance, and caught the crunch of their feet before they drifted bewildered into the illumination. What a magic of

mystery is here, what a fairy atmosphere, what a fluent, ethereal plasticity is possible, when no character is cut suddenly and sharply off by a wing-piece or a door, but all melt away or grow into being, like the figures in a dream! And yet we sit eternally for our dramatic entertainment in an artificial theatre and let this magic borderland of drama lie unexplored! Only the young people in our colleges know better. They are still poets and lovers of the night.

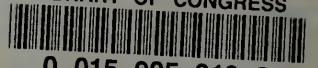
Yet none of us is ever quite so far from childhood, perhaps, that the night has wholly lost for him its charm and its mystery. Still it must remain, at least, the symbol of the Eternal Mystery, which is why, possibly, we grow with advancing years less eager to contemplate it. But there is no man who does not now and then walk by night on the edge of the woods, where the trail is a dim gray ribbon, and in the moon-deepened shadows see the white nymphs of the Heart's Desire. There is no man who, on a summer night, does not now and then pause to listen for the myriad tiny sleigh-bells of the crickets, chimes of elfland faintly ringing, which fall into one chord at

regular intervals, and bring to the heart an inexpressible calm, to the turbid spirit a sleepy hush of peace. There is no man who, somewhere, somehow — it may be over a lawn in Central Park, or in his own garden, or just on the deserted pave of a city street — does not watch the moon obliterate the ugliness of the world with a soft suffusion of its golden light, and does not hear for an instant the whisper of the old Romance. Perhaps there is no man, when “the insect cares of life” annoy and the pilgrim’s pack is galling and heavy, who does not one night throw open his window and gaze into the immensity of silent space, into the great garden of the patient stars. The man meditates in silence, carried out of himself. How small he feels, and yet how large! How petty his selfish interests and worries in the face of this infinity of worlds! How large his soul which can roam the interstellar spaces! New strength pours in upon him from the deeps of heaven. The insect cares have ceased to sting, the heavy burden is forgotten. He is one with the brooding mystery of the night, he has joined Orion in the infinite march with God.

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To-night there has been a thaw. I stepped out on the city square before my dwelling. The slushy snow, fouled almost beyond recognition by human traffic, lay in the gutters and in patches on the grass. The air was warm, almost like spring, but there was no spring smell in it. Instead, there was a heavy, stale, dead odor, at best as of a world warmed over. But I looked up. Against the misty silver of the arc-lamps the trees threw a delicate tracery of black, as lovely as those swamp maples against the twilight when I was a little boy. Still higher, the electric cross on the church-tower blazed upon the sky like a constellation. The stars were overhead. It was late, and the city's roar was stilled. A far-off bell flung a chime to me over the housetops. It seemed as if the cows were calling from the upland pastures. The mind takes wings under the silent dome of night. Sleep is but the lesser part of our sunless hours, and day itself, perhaps, the lesser part of what in future times unguessed we shall most delight to remember.

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